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Audience Research in RTE

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The broadcasting landscape in Europe has been radically transformed since the mid 1980s and is still undergoing significant change. The main impetus for change derives from a number of factors. For example, governments adopted policies tending towards the deregulation of the airwaves in virtually all European countries and these policies were facilitated by major advances in technology. This latter factor brought the VCR into popular use and allowed for a significant expansion in the number of broadcasting channels available. The satellite broadcasters also arrived, beaming signals across national boundaries, and aiming to create a multinational audience attractive to transnational advertisers and viewers. These changes pose enormous challenges to the national public broadcasters across Europe to build on their strengths and work hard to retain support and loyalty of their domestic audiences whose many and varied interests they strive to address and serve. This is no easy task in the international market place of open skies television where a host of stations in multi-channel homes are competing for the attention of the viewers. While competition imparts an urgency to the domestic programme planning and creative processes, the vulnerability and exposure of small national cultures, such as Ireland, has to be carefully considered where the resources of any one of the competing foreign stations is a multiple of the funds and resources available to the small national broadcaster. Survival in that kind of open skies competitive environment calls for considerable ingenuity in programme innovation, production and scheduling; audience research has a modest supporting role to play in that context.

This paper will examine the role of audience research in RTE in support of the policy making process in the organization. Research can be broadly classified as being either quantitatively or qualitatively oriented. Quantitative research refers to the sophisticated mechanisms which have been developed to measure as accurately as possible the size and composition of the audience to radio and television programmes. The data bases generated by such research are, of course, hugely important for the buying and selling of advertising time on both media. RTE's sales and marketing personnel have full access to the quantitative databases and exploit them (along with the advertising industry) to negotiate the sale of advertising time. The quantitative databases however have been designed so that the information can be used and processed to serve different purposes. So while both the sales and audience researchers dip into the same pool of data, the uses that are made of the information are different; the clients and their needs also differ. The area of qualitative research touches on a host of concerns to do with the attitudes and values of the population being addressed by the broadcaster. To adequately discharge their duties to inform, educate and entertain the audience, it is imperative that the public broadcaster has an understanding of, and respect for, the cultural and social mores of its own society if it is to retain the trust placed in it by the public. To that end, a wide range of research projects is conducted into the opinions, tastes and attitudes of the public to assist RTE in the credible discharge of its public broadcasting remit.

Perhaps the most visible aspect of media research is the publication of various rating tables for both radio and television stations and programmes. Considerable time and resources are devoted to this aspect of audience research so that the paper will first examine the quantitative radio and television audience measurement mechanisms and then deal with some dimensions of the less visible but no less important qualitative research undertaken by RTE.

Radio research – a brief history

Formal radio listenership research in Ireland dates from March 1953, when Radio Eireann (as RTE Radio was then called) commissioned the first full-scale national radio listenership survey from the Central Statistics Office. This early formal survey of adults (aged 14 years and upwards) was conducted among a random sample of radio licence holders from the records kept by the Department of Posts and Telegraphs. Interviews were carried out mainly by officials of that Department. There was another similar radio survey in the autumn of that year and two further surveys were commissioned in 1954. A number of market research companies had started business in the early 1960s and two of these companies were contracted to conduct radio listenership research for Radio Eireann/RTE Radio in the 1960s and early 1970s. Six such surveys were conducted by the Market Research Bureau of Ireland Ltd. (MRBI) from 1963 to 1970 and the seventh study in the series was conducted by Irish Marketing Surveys Ltd. (IMS) in 1972. Moves were afoot in the early 1970s to consolidate radio listenership, newspaper readership, cinema attendance and some aspects of television viewing research into a joint industry research project. Negotiations were concluded successfully and radio research was formally consolidated with newspaper readership and cinema attendance in the Joint National Media Research (JNMR) surveys which commenced in mid 1972 and ran on a continuous annual basis until 1989. In 1989, the constituent parts of the JNMR decided to concentrate on their own specific market segments. For example, newspaper readership was regrouped into a specialist and exclusive readership survey (Joint National Readership Research/JNRR).

In the summer of 1989, some of the newly franchized Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) radio stations came on air. Discussions commenced between these stations and RTE, under the aegis of the two advertising industry representative bodies, (the Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland – IAPI – and the Association of Advertisers in Ireland – AAI), to explore the possibilities of setting up a joint industry committee to consider a new comprehensive national radio survey. It was hoped that all stations would contribute to the research which would serve both the advertisers and the radio stations with accurate and reliable data for airtime sales purposes primarily and also for programme policy purposes. Agreement was quickly reached in principle on the desirability of setting up a new single-currency research mechanism and the Joint National Listenership Research (JNLR) survey was born. The Committee which consisted of representatives of RTE, Century Radio, Capital and Classic Hits FM in Dublin and Radio South FM in Cork, commenced discussions and drew up a research specification for an all embracing research survey for the new radio era under the chairmanship of IAPI and AAI on a rotating basis.

While the accepted methodology used in Ireland since 1953 was the day-after face-to-face aided recall interview research tool, the JNLR Committee had an open mind on the methodology to be employed in the new competitive situation. The research specification drawn up by the JNLR Technical Committee was non-directive in terms of methodology and was responded to by four market research companies. Presentations were made to the JNLR Committee in October, 1989. Both the diary system and the face-to-face aided recall method were given as options by the two short-listed market research companies. The JNLR decided that the diary system should be fully tested before a final decision could be made in relation to the optimum methodology to be employed. Following on consultations with the two remaining tendering companies, MRBI Ltd. was selected by the JNLR to conduct a rigorous test of the diary method to help the Committee arrive at an informed decision. A specification was drawn up by the JNLR, and MRBI conducted a carefully structured test and presented the results to the JNLR early in 1990. The test findings convinced even the most ardent diary advocates of the difficulties presented by the diary method as compared with the well-known advantages and disadvantages of the face-to-face aided recall method. The overall diary response rate was not a serious problem. The essential problem with the diary was the differential rate of response from various segments of the audience. For example the rate of diary response from younger

listeners was particularly disappointing. Given that many of the new broadcasters were targeting younger listeners, the implications of diary results would have been quite serious and potentially misleading.

Discussions continued at an accelerated pace with MRBI, the selected JNLR contractor, to ensure that the survey would go into field as early as possible in 1990 to provide results to the stations and the advertisers at an early date. Meanwhile, following representations from the IRTC, the JNLR was expanded to include the IRTC as a full participant to represent and address the needs of the smaller local radio stations within the ambit of the national research framework. A successful solution to this problem was developed by the JNLR and the first phase of the three year contract with MRBI Ltd. went into field in April 1990. The first JNLR survey results, covering the April to June period, became available in the summer of 1990. Since July 1990, the survey has been continuous with interviewing all year round. The consolidated 1990 results were published early in March 1991. The report for the year ended June 1991 was published in September of that year and the report for 1991 was issued in March 1992. Reports will issue at six monthly intervals until the end of the current contract term (extended to end 1993). The JNLR is thus a thoroughly researched and agreed rolling annual survey which publishes results in a consolidated twelve month report every six months.

There is an ongoing debate in radio research circles about the differences in results which are thrown up by the diary and the aided-recall method of research. The JNLR Committee was concerned about the quality, reliability and acceptability of the diary data and decided unanimously to opt for the interview system. The JNLR is fully aware that diary research throws up more listening than is the case under face-to-face aided recall. Experience in both Europe and North America and the Irish diary test in late 1989 testify to that fact. The issue before the JNLR in 1990 was not the difference in the quantity of listening but the more basic problems revealed by the test which cast serious doubts on the acceptability of the data deriving from the diary system as compared with the familiar and controlled situation which obtains with aided recall interviews. The question of methodology, however, is open for further discussion and the matter will be reviewed again by the JNLR in the latter half of 1992.

The strongly stated needs of the industry for reliable reach and frequency data still had to be addressed and solved within the interview methodology situation. The JNLR believes that it has achieved a satisfactory answer to that problem. Each respondent is interviewed twice within a short period. The first interview tracks his/her listening on a typical weekday and the follow-up interview records the same individual's listening patterns on both Saturday and Sunday. Some extra questions have been added to the survey to get a measure of the respondent's exposure to radio stations over longer periods e.g. past week, past month etc. to address the broader reach requirements of the industry. Arising out of this strategy, a detailed process of consultation got under way between the JNLR participants to develop a suitable schedule evaluation package for the broadcasters and advertisers based on interview research. Agreement was reached on a new software package which is specifically designed to address schedule evaluation based on interview data. The new system, to be called REMIT (Radio Evaluation Model for Ireland by Telmar), is being tested in the Irish market and will be available to the stations and the advertising agencies at an early date.

As noted above, four JNLR reports have been published to date. The results of the last JNLR survey, which referred to calendar year 1991, are summarized in terms of the shares of listening obtained by RTE and the commercial IRTC stations nationwide.

RTE Radio had a 63 per cent share of all adult radio listening and the commercial IRTC stations won the remaining 37 per cent share. However, Century Radio ceased broadcasting on 19 November 1991; its six percent share of national listening will be distributed in 1992 as listeners opt for alternatives. Future JNLR reports will cast light on the post Century Radio share situation.

TABLE 1
JNLR survey – calender year 1991
Stations' shares of listening (per cent adults – weekdays)

Listening to Radio	**100%**	
LISTENING TO RTE RADIO		**63%**
RTE Radio 1	43%	
2FM	19%	
Other RTE stations	1%	
LISTENING TO INDEPENDENT		**37%**
Century Radio*	6%	
Local Stations	31%	
		100%

Share data are calculated for the JNLR on the 7.00a.m. to 7.00p.m. day
*Century Radio ceased broadcasting on 19 Nov. 1991.

Television research

RTE commenced television broadcasting from the Kippure transmitter, just south of Dublin, on 31 December 1961. RTE (or Telefis Eireann as it was called up to 1965) signed a contract with Irish TAM Ltd. on 28 February 1962, for the provision of a television audience measurement system for the republic which came into operation on 2 April 1962. The contract provided for a monthly report on viewing levels, audience composition for programmes and commercial cost per thousand data on adults and homes viewing. The measurement system was confined to the Kippure transmission area in the first instance (the Dublin region largely) and was gradually extended to the rest of the country in step with the development of the transmission network as it expanded to cover the whole country. In the early years, the TAM television meter recorded only the on/off set situation and the station being viewed. The people viewing information was recorded by the cooperating households in an accompanying diary which was filled in each day by household viewers and returned to Irish TAM at the end of the week for analysis and integration with the station data from the meters. There have been a number of upgrades of the measurement equipment supplied by Irish TAM Ltd. over the years. The current contract, which came into operation in May 1989, makes use of the most up-to-date audience measurement equipment and recording system available. The 'AGB-4900 Peoplemeter' measurement equipment now in service provides both RTE and its partners in the advertising industry (IAPI) with overnight ratings on all RTE programmes and a host of other data on viewing patterns in Ireland.

Television is a relatively new arrival on the Irish media scene. Since RTE television began on New Year's Eve 1961, there has been a very rapid adoption of the new medium by households and television itself has developed and extended into a number of related area in the intervening years. A brief look at the rate of television penetration and the progress of its associated technologies over the past thirty years will indicate the quickening pace of the development and adoption of television technologies particularly in recent years.

Within ten years of the start-up of RTE Television, three quarters of all household in the country had acquired television sets. The expansion of the multi-channel area (that is those homes capable of receiving at least one foreign station along with the RTE stations) has developed apace from the middle 1970s. At that time, less than half of television homes could view British stations whereas in the early 1990s, almost two thirds of homes receive not only British television but also a range of satellite stations

TABLE 2
Television in Ireland
Percentage of Homes with TV and related Facilities/Equipment

Years	TV	Multi-Ch.	Colour	Remote Ctrl.	VCR	Teletext
1962*	43	60				
1966	54	38				
1971	76	37				
1976	83	44	25			
1981	92	47	62	5		
1986	92	58	81	14	13	1
1991	95	65	93	56	44	13

Source: Irish TAM Establishment Surveys.
* The 1962 figures refer only to the limited Kippure transmission area (largely Dublin).

either directly through a receiving dish or via a local cable system. The spread of cable in the 1980s and the coming on-stream of the satellite stations in 1986/87 gave an immediate boost to the expansion of multi-channel homes in Ireland. Dublin is now one of the most competitive cities in Europe in the sense that no other city has so much television available to its citizens in the home language of the recipients. Colour television is now almost universally available and the black and white set is a rarity. The remote control mechanism has been adopted by over half of all TV homes in a ten year period and the VCR has found wide acceptance in an even shorter time span. Teletext equipped sets are also making their presence felt in Irish homes, related no doubt to the ongoing renewal of TV sets in homes. There has been a further development also in the multi-set television home. In 1991, some 20 per cent of homes had two or more television sets and this aspect of the domestic television environment can be expected to increase gradually over time.

The penetration or availability of various television channels in Irish homes in 1991 is indicated here and shows clearly the degree of competition in English language television which is now available in a very significant proportion of Irish homes.

TABLE 3
Main Channels Available and Share Viewing in Irish Homes, 1991
(Percent of TV Homes)

Channels	Availability	Viewing Shares
RTE	100%	
Network 2	99%	65% - Total RTE
BBC 1	64%	
BBC 2	63%	
UTV	53%	
Channel 4	53%	29% - Total British
Sky One	34%	
Sky News	31%	
Super Channel	17%	
MTV	13%	
Children's Channel	17%	6% - Total Satellite

The availability of foreign channels is likely to increase further as cable systems expand and the sale of satellite dishes increases in homes where a cable connection is not feasible. RTE's share of peaktime viewing (6.00p.m. to midnight), which stood at 65 per cent in 1991, will come under further pressure as international competition intensifies in the next few years. In the multi-channel areas, RTE holds just under 50 per cent of peaktime viewing but this share comes under even greater strain where

satellite stations are also available. The research data point up the strengths and weaknesses of RTE's schedules and help to inform the decision making processes in RTE as the station endeavours to provide the public with a broad, interesting and relevant range of programme output.

A useful feature of the new television audience measurement system is the availability of a programme appreciation facility to panel viewers. At various times during transmission, viewers in the selected panel of TV homes are asked to register their appreciation or lack of appreciation of the programme they have just viewed. They indicate their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction on a five point scale which runs from 'very good' to 'very bad'. The appreciation score is registered by way of the household panel handset and the information is stored and retrieved overnight from each home along with the normal viewing data over the telephone system. The facility allows panel householders to register their opinions on programmes seen and the aggregate results provide useful feedback to programme management on audience reactions to specific programmes.

Qualitative research

The discussion thus far has mainly focused on the mechanisms which have been developed to measure the size and the composition of the audience for all RTE's programmes on both radio and television. The appreciation facility incorporated in the television measurement system breaks the barrier between quantitative and qualitative research and helps RTE to get a feel for general audience reaction to selected television programmes. While it is a useful guide, it does not go far enough to address the many varied questions raised within RTE about the public's view of the station's overall performance and to provide it with a detailed analysis of the performance of individual programmes.

At a corporate level, RTE is concerned to keep itself informed of its perceived position in Irish life given its mandate from the Oireachtas to provide a public broadcasting service of quality, interest and relevance to the nation across a wide range of outputs. A complex organization like RTE needs to keep itself informed of public opinion about the discharge of its mandate and to be aware of the public's view of its treatment of sensitive matters in the public domain. For example, while editorial mechanisms exist within RTE to ensure balance and fairness in current affairs (a legislative imperative), it is important for RTE to be aware of the public's perception on this matter. The question of sex and violence in the broadcast media is a matter of public concern and debate from time to time. While RTE has put internal machinery in place to deal with these matters, it is also important to have some structured feedback from the public on its overall performance on these sensitive subjects. Public opinion research is used in these cases to get a detailed picture of the views of the public on RTE's performance on these matters. The research is designed in RTE, the fieldwork is carried out by reputable market research companies and the results are available to corporate RTE at intervals.

In the middle 1980s, there was some concern in European broadcasting about the huge success of some US soap opera material which was popular in many European countries. RTE participated in a multi-country study of the reactions of the audience to samples of US and European soap operas. RTE's contribution to the study was to assess the response of Irish viewers to a sample of *Glenroe* and *Dallas*. A report on the study highlighted the different ways in which Irish audiences reacted to the domestic soap and to the imported variety and provided interesting insights into the particular strengths and pleasures derived from *Glenroe* by Irish viewers.

The assessment of programmes is an ongoing responsibility of RTE management. Views about particular programmes or about segments of programming are tested with the audience in consultation with programme management. The results are then evaluated along with a host of other considerations which affect programme schedules.

All such research is conducted by competent market research companies for RTE and the results are fed into RTE's internal decision processes.

In recent years, there has been a growing debate about the role of music and the type of music appropriate to RTE's radio channels. A number of research projects have been undertaken in consultation with radio management to address this topic. The aim of radio management is to achieve the best possible fit between, say, the role which Radio 1 plays as the nation's premier news, information, entertainment and cultural radio channel and the expectations and satisfactions derived from the channel by its listeners. The role of music is an important element in the output mix.

Audience research in public broadcasting is a multi-faceted endeavour. The particular mission of the public broadcaster, however, inclines the researcher more towards a perspective of the audience as citizen rather than viewing the audience as a mere consumer. The evolution in European public broadcasting which is leading to a clearer role for public broadcasting in the life of the nation also has implications for audience researchers whose primary task is to respond to the needs of the programming and corporate management with contributions and answers to the many questions raised.

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Cinema film distribution and exhibition in Ireland

Damien O'Donnell

Introduction

This study of cinema film distribution and exhibition practices in Ireland examines key aspects of the industry: firstly, the basic mechanics of the industry and its operations; secondly, the various alignments between exhibitors and distributors and consequences of those alignments; thirdly, the impact of the arrival of British multiplex companies; fourthly, the costs of film censorship; and finally, the idea of an 'art-house' circuit in Ireland.

Because the industry in Ireland is notoriously secretive, detailed data is difficult to get. Available figures contradict each other although many members of the industry were helpful in providing information. Figures for revenue and attendances for individual films and cinemas were impossible to obtain, despite the author's belief that they are privately available to all the major distributors and exhibitors(1).

The Main Players in the Industry

The major exhibitor is the Ward Anderson group which controls over 100 cinemas, and owns the Savoy and both Screen cinemas in Dublin. Ward Anderson compete against the Adelphi and Carlton cinemas in the city centre, the latter being controlled by the Cannon/MGM group. Albert Kelly of the Classic Cinema in Harold's Cross, is also the Chairman of the Independent Cinemas Association of Ireland (ICAI), which represents nearly all the independent cinemas not controlled by Ward Anderson. Neil Connolly manages the Lighthouse Cinema, the only independent cinema in Dublin city centre. The Irish Film Institute (IFI) owns a 50 per cent share in the Lighthouse. The IFI is also involved in the Irish Film Centre which is due to open in late 1992 as a resource centre for film, with two cinemas of its own.

All the major American film distributors have local offices which handle distribution in Ireland as part of the UK. Four of these are major American players: United International Pictures, 20th Century Fox, Columbia Tri-Star, and Warner Bros. In addition, there are two Irish distributors: Abbey Films,the distribution arm of Ward Anderson, and Dublin Film Distributors, run by Arthur McGuinness, who prides himself on being the only independent Irish film distributor. Finally, there is United Cinemas International, which has recently built two multiplexes in Dublin. UCI (Ireland) Ltd. is under the control of UCI (UK), and ultimately owned by Paramount and Universal Pictures in the United States.

After a thirty year decline, the number of visits to the cinema in Ireland increased in 1985. Irish cinema attendances have been rising steadily ever since; in the early 1990s, the figures should surpass 9.5m. per annum which it passed in 1980 on the way down. Figures released by Rank Screen Advertising indicated that in the twelve months to March 1992, there were 8.1m. admissions to the cinema. With an average ticket price of £2.50, the attendances brought in a gross box office revenue of £20.25m. Sales of food-stuffs inside the cinema probably added another 30–40 per cent to the cinema revenue.

This growth is mainly attributed to the quality of film being made in recent years, aiming for a broader and older audience. The arrival of multiplex cinemas in Ireland has

1. People interviewed in connection with this study are listed at the end of this article.

also made an impact. Ireland now has the highest cinema-going population in Europe; the annual admissions per capita for 1991 were 2.3 compared to an average of 1.8 across western Europe and 4.2 in the USA (Rank Screen Advertising, 1991).

The Mechanics of Film Distribution in Ireland

Film distribution in Ireland is similar to that in most other countries. The distributor buys the rights to distribute a film from the film's producer. The distributor then 'offers' the film to various exhibitors in his/her region. The number of exhibitors who are offered the film first is dependent upon the number of prints or copies that the distributor has available. Each print can cost £1,000 to make. The distributor assesses the film's likely performance in the region; if it is felt that the film will attract a large audience then s/he is likely to pay for a substantial number of prints – perhaps as many as fifty. If, on the other hand, the audience for a film is likely to be small, only one or two copies will be purchased thus reducing costs. The more film prints, the greater the number of cinemas where a film can be screened immediately upon release. With few copies, cinemas have to wait in line.

Distributors prefer to give first preference to exhibitors who have large cinemas in high population areas. When the film has finished its run, it moves to cinema screens in less densely populated areas, continuing its round until the revenue potential is drained. The distributor is responsible for having the film censored and promoting the film wherever it can be exhibited.

The exhibitor pays the distributor the agreed percentage of the net box office revenue (revenue from ticket sales less VAT). The amounts to be paid are usually set on a scale, although the particular scale varies from cinema to cinema (see Table 1). The scale is structured so that as the box office returns rise, the distributor's share increases. Some provincial cinemas with small revenues operate at a fixed price.

Table 1
An Example of a Sliding Scale

	Net Box Office Revenue £	Distributor's Fee £
Up to	1822	25
	1980	30
	2226	35
	2595	40
	2910	45
	4000	50

Source: Albert Kelly, Independent Cinemas Association of Ireland .

Distributor/Exhibitor Alignments

The six main film distributors aforementioned supply cinema films to eighty-four cinemas operating in the Republic of Ireland, which between them have 186 screens. Of these, thirty-nine are owned or controlled by Ward Anderson. Formed in 1947 by Leo Ward and Kevin Anderson, the company began its operations as a film distributor, which it continues under the name Abbey Films. Over time, Ward Anderson, sometimes known as the Green Group, began investing in cinemas around Ireland, owning thirty by 1970. It was the only chain of its size in Ireland and had a dramatic impact on the business. The majority of new films finishing their run in a major Dublin cinema would usually transfer to a Ward Anderson cinema in other Irish towns or cities.

Independents not linked with Ward Anderson, however, cried foul. In 1973, independent Dublin suburban cinema owners claimed that they had difficulty acquiring

a film once it had finished its run in Dublin city centre. They argued that Ward Anderson cinemas were given preferential treatment by film distributors, 'under threat that the multi-cinema firms will not show the film in any of their houses' and forcing independents to close (*Evening Herald*, 20 January 1976).

In 1976, the Examiner of Restrictive Practices investigated the complaints made by the ICAI that provincial exhibitors were forced to settle for

> low grade films and could not obtain the box office attractions until the benefits had been almost completely squeezed out by repeated showings all over the country (Restrictive Practices Commission, 1978:9).

The Examiner found that the claims made by the Independent Cinema Association were reasonable and true. In his report, the Examiner documented unfair and restrictive alignments between exhibitors and distributors: exhibitors would show all the product from some distributors but not others. The cinemas named were: the Adelphi and Carlton both owned by EMI (now by Cannon/MGM); the Savoy, Odeon and Metropole owned by Rank Cinemas; and the Ambassador owned by Ward Anderson. All films opening in Ireland would have their first run in one of these cinemas. Independents in the city centre and Dublin suburbs found it impossible to obtain copies of these films for a substantial period of time. (Traces of this situation still exist, although the time lag is much reduced.)

These alignments (see Table 2) were inherited from similar alignments in the UK, where Rank and EMI controlled large cinema chains. It suited the exhibitors because they were effectively given a film exclusively when its revenue potential was highest. As the film's revenue diminished, it was replaced by a new release. The arrangements also suited distributors because they were virtually guaranteed that their film would open in a prestige cinema no matter how bad the film or how stiff the competition from other products. After the film finished its 'first run' in city centre cinemas, it travelled around the country.

TABLE 2

Alignments Between First-Run City Centre Cinemas and Distributors, 1991

Adelphi/Carlton:	Paramount, Universal, M.G.M., Warner Bros.
Savoy:	United Artists, Columbia Tri-Star, 20th Century Fox, Walt Disney/Touchstone, Rank
Lighthouse:	deals with smaller English companies on its own behalf and rarely with the above film companies
UCI:	no alignments; will screen best product on offer from all distributors
Dublin Film Distributors:	no alignments; will usually take the screen with the best revenue potential for its films
Abbey Films:	although owned by Ward Anderson, is not necessarily aligned with Ward Anderson cinemas; will seek best screen available for its product
Warner Bros:	distribute Walt Disney/Touchstone product in Ireland/UK

Note: There are signs that the alignments are becoming more flexible. Recently films which would normally be shown at the Savoy are finding screens in the Adelphi or Carlton. This probably represents a glut of films from distributors aligned to Ward Anderson coinciding with a shortage of product from Adelphi or Carlton's usual distributors.

Ward Anderson cinemas appeared to receive particularly favourable treatment by the distributors. The Examiner's report found that certain high revenue films reached a

Ward Anderson cinema up to two years before an independent competitor in the same town. The Report alleged that Ward Anderson cinemas were given more favourable rates by the distributors. The report concluded:

> ...agreements between film renters (distributors) on the one hand, and the Adelphi, Carlton, Odeon (Irl.) Ltd. (Rank), and the Green Group (Ward Anderson) on the other, have conferred monopolies on these groups of exhibitors. Independent film exhibitors outside of these groups have been victims of unfair discrimination which has made it difficult and, in some cases, impossible for them to compete (Examiners Report,1977:70).

In April 1978, the matter was subsequently referred to the Restrictive Practices Commission which overturned the Examiner's conclusions, finding no evidence of a 'binding monopoly agreement.'

> While we are forced to reject the Examiner's contention that the system of distribution is inherently unfair and discriminatory, we consider that in some respects a more equitable and speedy system of distribution could be achieved (Restrictive Practices Commission, 1978:59).

Under the Restrictive Practices Act, 1972, the Restrictive Practices Commission approved 'voluntary measures for fairer distribution' which had been submitted by the distributors. The measures were intended to speed up the time it took a new release to reach suburban and other independent cinemas. With regard to the contention that Ward Anderson cinemas were given favourable rental rates the Commission claimed it

> did not find the terms of rental unfairly discriminatory, however the systems themselves lacked transparency and could lend themselves to some abuse which would be difficult if not impossible to isolate (Restrictive Practices Commission, 1978:61- 62).

Questions are raised about the effectiveness of these voluntary measures in the context of the closure of seventy-five cinemas in the decade following the report's publication. Many more cinemas suffered a decline. According to some industry sources, 'the reason why so many cinemas are run down is because we cannot get pictures at the time when there's money in them.' In 1962, there were 324 cinema screens in Ireland. At the time of the Examiner's report, 1976, this had fallen to 173 screens. In 1992, despite the opening of three new multiplexes in Dublin, increases in screens in Cork and Limerick, and plans well advanced for a multiplex in Galway, the number of screens is still only 186, spread amongst eighty-four cinemas.

In 1983, after almost thirty years decline in cinema attendance, Rank Cinema pulled out of Ireland, selling the prestigious Savoy cinema, in addition to the Metropole and Odeon. After tough negotiations, Ward Anderson bought the sites in what *Business and Finance*, (October 1983), described as a 'major shift in the balance of power among the city centre first run cinemas'. Following the purchase, Ward began a programme of closures of other cinemas he owned in the city, including the Regent, the Green, and the Ambassador (until its closure, the largest capacity single screen cinema in Dublin). Simultaneously, other independent city centre cinemas closed. By 1990, the only independent cinema in Dublin city centre was the Lighthouse, surviving because its unique programming of 'art-house' or small European films did not come from the major distributors or compete for the same audience as the larger cinemas.

Throughout the country, independents who have survived the competition for Hollywood movies are now finding life comparatively easier. The arrival of video and satellite movie channels in recent years has significantly reduced the shelf life of a film and distributors are more eager to ensure that their films get around the Irish circuit as quickly as possible. This has resulted in more prints of a film becoming available, and

more cinemas opening 'day and date' with the city centre cinemas. While the situation has improved, some believe that the 'system means some screens are denuded of product whilst others have a queue'.

Neither distributors nor the major exhibitors deny that films 'queue up to be shown' in particular Dublin cinemas. Distributors can claim that their first loyalty must be to the picture, to open in a high profile, prestige city centre cinema. If, as is sometimes the case, the particular cinema is full of high revenue films, then they are prepared to delay release of a film until a screen becomes available. At the same time, other cinemas could be waiting for a film to replace one that is slipping in box office revenue.

The arrival of the two United Cinema International (UCI) Multiplexes in the Dublin suburbs of Coolock and Tallaght was expected to end this practice. However, there is evidence that even with UCI's twenty-two new first run screens in Dublin and Ward Anderson's ten screen complex in Santry, distributors will still wait to showcase their films at the Adelphi, Carlton or Savoy. It is predicted that a proposed MGM ten-screen multiplex in the city centre will finally put an end to this practice.

The close alignment between distributor and exhibitor has met with opposing views. According to one distributor, the alignments 'give us broad support for a large number of films which may not be so successful, whereas other cinemas (suburban and provincial independents) try to get the best releases'. For example, during a nine month period, Columbia Tri-Star released thirty-four films in Ireland, all of which were screened by Ward Anderson while only fourteen played in suburban houses. In fact, a distributor's product might be screened even though it might lose money. By allowing city centre cinemas to 'show case' films ahead of the suburbs and the country, a film's shelf life might be extended. The arrangement works both ways; the attitude seems to be 'I'm not going to support your company if your company isn't prepared to support me'. When a film has completed its course in Dublin, it moves on to the rest of the country, where the exhibitor-distributor alignments do not exist. Films usually become available to the Ward Anderson circuit, which owns or controls most of the screens outside Dublin. Distributors feel their films have a better chance against dwindling provincial attendances by hooking up with an exhibitor who can guarantee as many as ninety screens outside of Dublin. Ward Anderson's relationship with the distributors and its dominant position exacerbate the difficulties of independent operators in provincial areas. This practice has been described as 'insane' and 'immoral'.

The answer to the independents' problems, particularly in the Dublin suburbs, would be to follow similar alignments to those of the city centre cinemas. The Classic, Harolds Cross, and the Stella, Rathmines, have alignments which mean they do not compete for the same films. If all the suburbs procured similar alignments, more films would be made available more quickly by their respective distributors. In an ideal world, there would be a film print for every cinema that wished to screen it. However, by their nature, cinema films have a limited availability. The costs would be too great for the distributor to give every cinema a print at the same time. Some cinemas must inevitably wait their turn; thus there must be a circuit. The potential revenue of the Ward Anderson group puts them at the head of the queue.

The alignment agreement has probably been the most decisive factor in the closure of all but one independent cinema in Dublin. In provincial areas, emigration has led to declining audiences. The arrival of the multiplexes might lead to a situation where everybody will be offered all films whether they are able to play them or not. It is, however, unlikely that sufficient prints will be available at the right time to aid the ailing provincial cinema.

It is possible that the distributors could put aside two prints of a new film which would travel alternating circuits of small independent cinemas, exclusive of the usual circuits. The ability of these small cinemas to get a print of 'a talked about film while it's still being talked about' would go far to keep them open. This proposal is still under

consideration, but its success depends on the distributors adopting a policy which lacks a sound financial motive. And, at the end of the day, business is business.

The multiplexes are coming! The multiplexes are coming!

In 1985, the first multiplex cinema opened in Milton Keynes in the UK. It has since been credited with the revitalization of the cinema exhibition market in Britain. Multiplexes are responsible for an 85 per cent increase in British audiences (*Screen Digest*, 1990). Their arrival marked the end of a thirty year decline in British cinema audiences, and they cannot be denied some of the credit.

The multiplex concept is to offer customers a luxurious well designed leisure facility with as many as sixteen screens. It aims to give audiences high standards of exhibition in terms of picture and sound, with the bonus of secure parking. Judging by their performances, the customers love it. By 1990, multi-plexes accounted for 26.5 per cent of the total cinema screens in Britain. Their arrival has had an impact on other exhibitors. United Cinemas International (UCI), one of the largest multiplex operators, has always said that it has never been their intention to close other cinemas. However, since the first multiplex opened its doors, 80 per cent of independent operators have closed. *Screen Digest* (October 1990) reported that 'the march of the multiplex appears unstoppable'.

In June 1987, the *Irish Press* claimed that AMC, a predecessor of UCI, was examining sites around Ireland with a view to opening multiplexes; Blanchardstown and Tallaght were mentioned. At the time, this idea was dismissed as premature. But there was a keen awareness that in a short time there would be competition from British cinema companies. In 1989, Ward Anderson announced a £12m. investment plan to convert cinemas in Cork and Limerick, and a site in Northern Ireland, into multi-screen cinema complexes. This was described as a 'response to the need for better quality cinemas in more intimate surroundings'. At a later date, Ward Anderson added plans for a seven screen cinema in Galway, and a ten screen multiplex at Omni Park, Santry, on Dublin's northside, which opened in March 1992.

UCI opted for two sites: Tallaght and Coolock. They opened a twelve screen multiplex in The Square, Tallaght's new shopping centre, in November 1990. The following August, a ten screen cinema opened on the Malahide Road, Coolock. Within ten months, UCI had become Dublin's largest cinema exhibitor.

The arrival of the multiplexes will probably be the most important factor shaping future cinema exhibition and distribution in Ireland. Tallaght and Coolock added twenty-two while Ward Anderson provided a further ten new first run screens to the city, where the previous total had been seventeen. It almost tripled the demand for prints of major new releases. The target audience for multiplex cinemas is the 250,000 people living within twenty-five minutes drive; Coolock UCI includes the city centre in its calculations. Between the two sites, UCI hopes to achieve admissions of just under two million per year. At this point, the company seems to be on course. Coolock broke the UCI record for attendances in the opening week with 23,000 admissions. Tallaght achieved its millionth customer in its forty-eighth weeks of operation, making it one of the two top sites in the company. Ironically, Tallaght's millionth customer was an independent cinema owner who had been forced to close a few years previously. With average admissions of 26,000 per week during April 1992, it was the busiest cinema within the UCI European network.

The sizes of the auditoria in the multiplexes are considerably smaller than those of the larger city centre houses. Tallaght's biggest capacity for a single screen is 360 compared to Savoy 1 with 760 or Adelphi 1 with 614. However, the projection systems in the cinemas gives them the capacity to interlock screens, allowing the same film to be shown in several auditoria only a few seconds behind each other. This gives the cinemas

an ability to cater for a large demand for a single film with the option of switching to other films if the attendances suddenly slacken.

How the UCI multiplexes will affect city centre cinemas is difficult to say. 1991 proved to be an excellent year for cinema attendances country-wide, up by 30 per cent (Rank Screen Advertising). In Dublin, the increase was 50 per cent. If the rise in city centre cinemas was equal to the country average, then one could attribute a 20 per cent increase in Dublin to the multiplexes. However, industry sources assert that the new multiplexes have captured at least 40 per cent of the Dublin audience. This would be equal to drawing customers away from the city centre and to finding substantial numbers of new or lapsed cinema-goers in the areas where they opened. Of the 112,900 cinema admissions for first run cinemas in Dublin on the week that UCI Coolock opened (2 August 1991), as many as 50,000 were from Tallaght and Coolock. Some of these must have come from city centre cinemas.

However one may dispute the figures, it is hard to deny that the multiplexes have been successful. They are likely to strengthen their grip on Dublin audiences in the future. UCI multiplexes could take about 10 per cent of the business away from the city centre. This would amount to between 100,000 – 200,000 admissions a year. So far city centre screens have escaped serious deterioration in business because of the excellent performances of their films.

Others believe that the multiplexes will cause the loss of city centre fringe screens. A proposed new MGM city centre multiplex may force the Adelphi and Carlton to consolidate onto one site to reduce overheads and staffing costs. Ward Anderson have already conducted a similar exercise in Cork and Limerick, renovating one of the cinemas in each city into a multi-screen site and closing down others. Its view is that the multiplexes, including its own development in Santry, will speed up film turnover. This will not hurt the Savoy because there is a backlog of films trying to find screens in Dublin.

Greater film turnover and the increased print numbers can only be good news for the independents, who should find films reaching their own audiences more quickly. This should resolve, to some degree, their dilemma of showing old films to empty houses. But the independents face a substantial loss of business to the multiplexes, possibly losing up to fifteen per cent of their audience. Audiences are being lured by the better quality services.

The UCI cinemas do have some critics – those who find their style and manner of operations akin to McDonalds and other fast food restaurants, and without the magic and appeal of 'The Movies'. Their arrival signals an increase in the proportion of foreign owned cinemas in Ireland, and raises questions about the repatriation of profits. The two UCI Dublin multiplexes are unlikely to be the last. The potential of a Cannon/MGM city centre multiplex coupled with UCI's success will undoubtedly prompt proposals for others. In addition, Ward Anderson may be considering another site on Dublin's south or west side. Property developers have designed new urban leisure and shopping centres with multiplex cinemas. There are even suggestions of a multiplex in the city centre.

The multiplex has not yet made an impact on small town cinemas in Wicklow or Kildare, although UCI Coolock's attraction for customers from Drogheda and environs is bound to continue. The effect will be to escalate the decline and disappearance of suburban cinemas, and the concentration of cinemas in locations attracting a less than intimate crowd of 250,000 people.Emigration and continuing population concentration in Dublin will probably ensure the demise of small provincial cinemas.

The Cost of Censorship

Since the passage of the Censorship of Film Act, 1923, any film screened in the Republic of Ireland must have a certificate of censorship. Between 1923 and 1977, over 3,000 films were banned, and another 8,000 had scenes cut. Over time, there has been a

relaxation in censorship. A return to the time when films were banned as 'Soviet poison', 'Pro-British propaganda' or because they contained 'lascivious dancing' is unlikely.

Sheamus Smith, the current censor, is reputed to dislike cutting films, preferring to give a higher age certificate. During the 1980s, the number of films banned or cut has decreased dramatically (see Table 3). Indeed, the decision not to ban Martin Scorcese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* probably caused the most controversy. This change is not due entirely to the liberal attitude of the censor, but to the content of contemporary film. Films are more family oriented, aimed at a broader audience. Dublin cinemas which regularly screened 'soft porn' in the 1970s have closed down. The 1991 banning of Ken Russell's *Whore* – a decision upheld by the Censorship Appeal Board – was the first since *Crimes of Passion*, another Russell film, in 1985.

TABLE 3
Number of Films Over 5000 Feet Banned and Cut, 1975 – 1990

	1965	1975	1985	1990
Presented for Censorship	275	315	172	153
Passed without cuts	170	131	153	151
Passed with cuts	63	154	18	2
Films Banned	42	30	1	0

Source: Film Censor, Annual Reports

While film censorship is now less problematic, its cost remains a burden for many small films seeking an Irish screening. The 1923 legislation specified that the censor's office should not be a burden on the state. Instead, costs would be met by charging the distributors. Charges per foot of film (90 feet = 1 minute) were raised from 2.3p to 3.5p and then 7p per foot in 1983 and 1988, respectively. At this rate, an average length film can cost about £700. A small film running at an art house cinema, such as Dublin's Lighthouse, would be struggling to recoup the censorship cost in addition to promotion and advertising. It is alleged that 'some worthwhile films have been excluded from the cinema by censorship and now others will be excluded by the cost of censorship'.

Few in the industry are happy with the situation, but they have failed to organize an effective lobby, primarily due to disagreement on a common strategy. The major distributors argue for an overall reduction in the cost of all film censorship. In contrast, the IFI and small independent Irish and UK distributors propose linking the cost of censorship to the number of prints being distributed in the country; the more prints, the higher the cost. The review of censorship charges is the most important reform required in the film distribution industry. The high cost acts as a tariff against small, mostly non-English language, non-European films while enabling major American films virtually unrestricted access. It is further claimed that censorship is a cultural, not a financial, argument. To reduce the overall charge would only serve to reduce the costs of the major distributors, and do little to aid smaller foreign and European films in finding a screen in Ireland.

The IFI proposes that censorship charges should be between one to two per cent of the gross revenue of the film. 'There has to be some relationship between the capacity of a film to earn and the amount that it pays in censorship costs'. This view is supported by other Irish exhibitors who agree with concessions or a nominal charge for cultural or subtitled films. Smith is said to be sympathetic, but changes rest with the Department of Justice, and ultimately with the Government. On occasion, the problem has been circumvented by employing the non-fee 'educational' certificate for films whose length may have made censorship prohibitive.

The fiercest opposition to the IFI proposal comes from the American owned major distributors, who reject any idea of films distributed by the majors subsidizing smaller films. They deny a cultural argument which places cinema in a unique position

straddling business and art, mass entertainment and cultural enlightenment. Such a categorization would necessitate the introduction of a two-tier censorship scheme, which would prove virtually impossible to implement.

The majors further argue that the Film Censor's costs could be reduced with a consequent reduction in censorship costs. They claim that a number of films being presented for censoring does not warrant the office remaining open five days a week – a view rejected by Smith. He points to additional responsibilities accruing to the Film Censor's office following the Video Recordings Act, 1989. With over 10,000 films available on video, extra staff are being recruited, dispelling hopes that costs could be reduced.

There are unlikely to be any changes in the short term. The Video Recordings Act will probably cause a reduction in the number of films available on video as some, for reason of cost or content, will not be submitted and thus removed from shelves. The Censor has rejected claims that a British certificate of censorship (BBFC) is sufficient for videos on release here.

American Domination of Cinema Films

'The pictures people want to see are basically American'

Hollywood dominates the world cinema industry. Its films are seen in every part of the world, and dubbed into dozens of languages. Following changes in eastern Europe, Hollywood film distributors are set to make as deep an impression on this new market as they have elsewhere. In Ireland, 95 per cent of films we see are American. In 1990, the censor passed 155 films of 2,000 feet and over; 116 (75 per cent) were from the US, thirty-five (22.5 per cent) were of Irish, British or European origin, and only four (2.5 per cent) came from the rest of the world. In the same year, only a small audience viewed the 480 films made in Europe.

This situation is not unique to Ireland. In the twelve EC member states, productions from other EC countries never account for more than 25 per cent of the theatrical releases; 80 per cent of all European feature films are not distributed beyond the borders of the country of production (Maggiore, 1990). In Germany, for example, SPIO, the film industry body, reported that for 1990 'US movies won a record market share of 83.8 per cent' compared to only 2.8 per cent and 2 per cent for the UK and France, respectively (*Screen International*, 4 October 1991:8). Even the forty-eight German-made productions only managed to capture under 10 per cent of their own market.

There is no reason to believe that the situation will improve during the 1990s. France, which is the most protective of its cinema industry, has found that the share of the French box office for US films has risen steadily, presently standing at 60 per cent. The increase in European cinema audiences signifies an increase in European audiences for American films. The American distributors, controlling all links in the chain from production to distribution, are the only players equipped to deliver a film to all European countries simultaneously, supported by heavily financed promotions and advertising. European distributors are only active on a national scale.

The European Community has quotas on the importation of television programmes but not for cinema. Could a quota system work? Imagine trying to force feed European foreign language films to an Irish audience addicted to a diet of Hollywood narrative cinema! One commentator remembers that not long ago an Irish audience would smash a cinema if confronted with subtitles. The dilemma represents a 'Catch 22' situation: 'The only films audiences are offered are American, therefore the only films they see are American, therefore the only films they want to see are American'.

There is a lack of distribution opportunities for European films because 'most cinemas want to play high revenue American product'. A related problem is that whereas Americans make films of international appeal, France makes films for the

French and Germany makes films for the Germans. Is the parochial nature of European cinema the reason it travels poorly? The experience of *Cyrano de Bergerac* suggests that this need not always be so; it appealed to audiences as much as a Hollywood blockbuster. Its hindrance was its language; if it had been dubbed instead of subtitled, it could easily have filled one of the major Dublin cinemas for weeks.

Professional dubbing is an expensive business. Subtitling, albeit accepted as 'high brow', is considerably cheaper. It is a widely held belief that dubbing would not work on an Irish audience, some of whom at least, have settled down with subtitles. Watching a film where the voices are out of synchronization can be very distracting. Yet few major American motion pictures released in Europe are subtitled; nearly all are dubbed and quite successfully, judging by audiences. If the rest of Europe readily accepts English language films dubbed into their own language, then the opposite might also be true. If the content is good, the dubious relationship between lips and voice can go unquestioned. Popular foreign-language films subtitled during their cinema release in Ireland are now available, dubbed or subtitled, on video.

The EC is sufficiently concerned about US dominance of European cinema to finance numerous initiatives. The European Film Distribution Organization (EFDO) provides a soft loan for distributors of European-produced film enabling them to find screens in other European countries. This project is likely to achieve only minor success; there is a view that the project has been a disaster for Ireland, but is a necessary element of our 'cultural defence'.

Very few European films are screened in Ireland and vice versa. Many such films would find large Irish audiences if producers and distributors had as much to spend on advertising, promotion and distribution as their American counterparts. A Hollywood film costing $27m. to produce could have $11.5m. spent on promotion. It is a rare European film that could match this. When companies spend this much money promoting their products, audiences are not going to a film but an 'event'. *Terminator 2* and *The Commitments* are recent examples.

American distributors will always have an advantage because of their large domestic audience. The average American attends the cinema 4.2 times per annum, compared with the EC average of 1.8 (Rank Screen Advertising; see Table 4). With such avid movie-goers, the American film producers have strong financial support. Europe, divided politically, culturally and linguistically, cannot yet hope for such a supportive domestic market from which to launch itself on the world.

TABLE 4

Comparison of Population, Cinema Screens and Box Office Revenue of 17 western European countries and the US, 1990

	Population	Cinema Screens	B.O. Revenue
W. Europe	357.5m	19,565	$2,709.9m
US	247.5m	23,132	$5,033.5m

Source: Screen Digest, October 1990.
Note: the vast majority of the US and European box office revenue finds its way back to Hollywood majors.

Proposals for state subsidies for films have only minor appeal in Ireland, although an interventionist approach could create its own momentum. The state could provide financial support for cinemas which devote themselves to screening films other than high revenue American product. The Lighthouse already receives indirect state subsidy through the involvement of the Irish Film Institute. Situated only minutes from the two largest exhibitors in Dublin, it aims to build an audience for 'art-house' and foreign language film, which are rarely screened. Despite its success, the audience is small and may be divided between the Lighthouse and the two screens opening at the Irish Film Centre in 1992. The latter could put the Lighthouse in a financially untenable position.

To overcome potential problems, the IFI is keen that regular discussions and co-operation should be established between the two venues to avoid direct competition for new films.

Proposals to establish an 'art-house' circuit outside Dublin were made at the 1991 AGM of the IFI. The circuit would consist of 35mm prints selected from films screened at the Irish Film Centre and the Lighthouse. Previous attempts have been unsuccessful, although the Federation of Irish Film Societies, which has about twenty-five active societies around the country, has developed a reasonably successful 16mm circuit. There is also hope that the new multiplex cinemas at the Capital in Cork and the Savoy in Limerick will provide a steady flow of such films. The main drawback is cost; established exhibitors outside Dublin speak of a 'commercial motivation'. If these films do not produce a profit, they will not last.

Great efforts as well as state support will be required if American domination of cinema screens in Ireland and the rest of Europe is to be tackled successfully. It may be that cinema audiences will insist on Hollywood films, but at least cinemas should be able to offer a European selection capable of competing with Hollywood. There is a tough battle ahead. Bows and arrows against lightning? Perhaps, but with the arrival of 1992 and a concerted effort to achieve greater awareness of European film in individual member states combined with a concrete plan for European-wide distribution of same, the chances of success are better than we may think.

What Happens Next ?

As this century draws to its close, the following possible developments are worth noting.

The multiplexes will undoubtedly build on their audiences. They could easily recapture the 15-20 per cent of the audience that is believed to have been lost to home video. They may even add to it. With increased emphasis on leisure, cinemas may avoid another thirty year decline. However, they face fierce competition from the new and growing leisure industries which have taken root in Ireland. A strategy to broaden the appeal of film to hold on to an ageing European audience is required.

The concentration of more screens into fewer core locations with expanding admissions and revenue will continue (see Table 5). Emigration will effectively denude provincial cinemas of audience, decreasing by ten per cent over the next five years. Dublin's share of the total Irish market, presently just over 50 per cent, could grow beyond 60 per cent. Suburban cinemas which fall within the catchment area of the multiplexes are particularly vulnerable. Different viewing patterns will ensure that suburban multiplexes and city centre cinemas survive, complementing rather than competing with each other. Multiplexes find evenings their busiest time, while city centre cinemas see afternoon and early evening showings growing in importance. Nevertheless, the close proximity of the Omniplex in Santry to UCI Coolock – two miles – may seriously curtail each other's business. It is possible that one or other could find itself in difficulty within five years.

Table 5
Cinema Admissions and Estimated Revenue, 1980-1989

	1980	1985	1987	1988	1989	1991
Total admissions	9.5m	4.5m	5.2m	6.0m	7.0m	8.1m
Admissions per head	2.79	1.27	—	1.69	1.97	2.31
Box Office Revenue	£17.6m	11.3m	13.0m	15.0m	17.5m	20.3m

Note: Film rights for Ireland are sold as part of the rights for the UK. Accurate figures for the Irish market are difficult to obtain. However, industry sources estimate the Irish market to be 8-10 per cent of the total UK market. The average admission price was £2.50 in 1989-91. Source: Rank Screen Advertising.

As mentioned previously, the Irish Film Centre will open in 1992 with two new screens appealing to the same audience as the Lighthouse. Originally, the latter was conceived as a temporary project while the IFC theatres were being built. Now it seems set to stay. If the Screen at College Green is to be one of the casualties, then there is every possibility that they will survive alongside each other.

Distributors should be happy with more screen in Dublin. It will enable them to have more prints of their films playing and ease the difficulty of finding screens for mediocre films. It is not clear how the alignment system in the city centre will operate in the future. A second multiplex company would probably halt existing arrangements and give rise to a bidding system similar to the US. An alternative could be a much watered down alignment system which would give exhibitors exclusivity of some but not all picture company products.

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Interviews

Neil Connolly, Lighthouse Cinema
Catherine Costello, Chairperson, Federation of Irish Film Societies
Chris Edwards, General Manager, United Cinemas International, Ireland, Ltd.
Michael Hussey, General Manager, Adelphi Carlton Cinemas
David Kavanagh, Director, Irish Film Institute
Albert Kelly, Chairman, Independent Cinemas Association of Ireland
Paddy Kelly, Branch Manager, United International Pictures
Gerry Mulcahy, Branch Manager, Columbia Tri-Star Pictures
Sheamus Smith, Irish Film Censor
Paul Ward, Director, Dublin Cinema Group, Ward Anderson Group

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Media images of disability

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Brian Trench

> You only have to look at her picture to know that Rosemary Murray is a carer. A serious, calm woman, who also looks very much as though she ought to be somebody's muse, but she would not dream of dressing her slender frame up for the photographer or even of fixing her hair especially.

Thus writes Sandra Woolridge in *The Southern Star* (11 November 1990). Rosemary Murray, an occupational therapist working with people with disabilities, is elsewhere described as a 'barely noticeable figure somewhere amongst the little clutch from St. Joseph's Workshop, behind them as they sell their craftwork'.

Though they are standing in front, we do not see them at first. The barely noticeable Ms Murray dominates the picture. But as the profile explores Rosemary Murray's work further there is a description of people using sewing machines, of someone planning patchwork, of Ann Wilcox making a rug. And another of the workshop workers is named too – 'Margaret ably handles masses of proofreading, accounts, layouts and photocopying from her wheelchair'.

The profile was one of the items collected in a week-long 'media watch' campaign organized by the National Rehabilitation Board through local administrators and workshop participants in preparation for the NRB/RTE conference, 'Challenging Images – Perceptions of Disability and the Role of the Media', held on 2–3 December, 1991. The conference organizers asked staff and trainees to collect newspaper cuttings referring to disabilities and long-term illnesses. Of sixty-six items from the local press and twenty-six items from the national press supplied – all covering the period 9–15 November 1991 – *The Southern Star* profile was the only one which named people with disabilities who did not have some extraordinary sporting or academic achievement to their name or who were not the object of some appeal for financial assistance. People with disabilities were the ostensible topics of many other stories, but they generally remained an undifferentiated mass — 'the handicapped', 'the disabled'; able-bodied people who assisted them were generally identified.

Girl guides who collected money to buy wheelchairs for young people with disabilities were photographed and named. The members of support groups' committees were named. The winners of prizes in charity fundraising draws were congratulated. The celebrities who contribute to charity fundraising campaigns were celebrated.

The coverage appeared to reflect a fear of the 'other', even a desire to keep a distance from disability. Those who lived with their disabilities without significant constraint were to be admired – but from afar. A similar syndrome can be observed in coverage of the 'Third World': Irish voluntary and professional people are identified and quoted in detail; other participants in the development process remain largely anonymous and are most often seen as supplicants or sufferers.

Most of the supplied material on disabilities fell readily into three categories : reports of fundraising; reports of support group activities; tributes to individuals with disabilities deemed to have demonstrated extraordinary courage. Smaller groups of items arose from public statements about inadequate facilities. Those statements came most frequently from public representatives, suggesting that those with disabilities or long-term illnesses and their carers, where they have them, represent a significant political constituency. Yet it is a constituency represented in the media at one or more removes.

Sources make the news and it is not possible to identify a single item among the ninety-two under scrutiny which originated from and relied mainly on someone with a disability or long-term illness. Parents are sometimes the intermediaries, even when the focus appears to be on their adult offspring. The diminution of people with disabilities – even, or especially, those praised for their achievements – reinforces a view of them as eternally dependent, eternally children.

Fundraisers

The activities of charity and support groups are a staple part of the media menu. People who give their time to these activities are frequently profiled. The issue of *Southern Star* that contained the profile of Rosemary Murray also included a smaller feature on Paddy Clifford, ESB area supervisor in Bantry and chairman of the Bantry and District Mentally Handicapped Association which maintains St. Joseph's Workshop where Rosemary Murray works.

The women who support the work of the Cope Foundation by attending a cookery demonstration in Midleton were photographed in *The Carrigdhoun Weekly* (14 November). Dympna O'Kane of Dundalk was profiled in *The Argus* (15 November) which reported she 'is always taking the plunge for charity' – taking a Christmas Day swim at Gyles Quay to raise funds for Rehab, for instance.

Tom Culbert and colleagues at De Beers, Shannon, raised £25,000 in a parachute jump to help the Share a Dream organization which provides support for children who are terminally ill, it was reported elsewhere (source not indicated). 'Tom is son of Una and the late Philip Culbert, Limerick Junction. Well done, lads,' the report concluded. Even the parents of fundraisers rate a mention.

Fundraisers provide one of the principal types of 'human interest' stories, that is, stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Don McDonald plans to run the 375 miles from Malin to Mizen Head and at the age of fifty, *The Evening Press* (13 November) reported. He hopes to raise over £40,000 to pay for treatment for six-year-old Terry Cullen who is deaf. People with disabilities become vaguely visible as the objects of other people's extraordinary efforts. Of the sixty-one cuttings supplied from local papers, forty-one concerned fundraising or support activities. 'Sale of work to help the handicapped' was the headline on the Newmarket notes in *The Corkman* (14 November), which detailed that purchasers of tickets on the door will enter a draw in which the first prize is half a ton of coal, second prize 5 cwt. The particular charity or charities to benefit from the event were not identified: 'the handicapped' becomes a catch-all category. 'All proceeds go to the handicapped,' it was stated.

County Sound, the Cork local radio station, included the same sale of work among the items covered by its Newmarket correspondent. Local radio reproduces many of the forms established in the local papers. Radio Kerry had items relating to disability on each of the days under review – most dealt with charity events, flag days, one with training and another with a talk to be given by a man in a wheelchair cured at Lourdes.

In the hierarchies observed by the social columns of the national newspapers those with a prominent role in charities concerned with disabilities or long-term illnesses enjoy special privilege. *The Evening Press* (11 November) reported that the fundraising community had its own hierarchy: awards were to be presented to celebrities 'to honour their fundraising work for charity over the years'.

Support groups

Support groups for those with long-term illnesses or disabilities are significant sources of information for the local media. The local notes in provincial papers act as bulletin boards for their card drives and other activities. The Donegal papers (e.g.

Donegal Democrat, 14 November) reported initiatives to set up a talking newspaper and the formation of a committee to examine wheelchair accessibility. The support groups for those with long-term illnesses or disabilities are also sources of a smaller group of pieces in the local and national media explaining the nature of a particular illness or charity. In Cavan, *The Leader* (13 November), *The Anglo Celt* (14 November) and the local radio station, Northern Sound, all carried items on epilepsy, reflecting the impact of the Irish Epilepsy Association's Brainwave campaign. *The Evening Press* carried a feature on epilepsy (12 November) and reported plans to set up a support group for those with Turners Syndrome (15 November), explaining the syndrome through the experience of a couple whose daughter was born with it. *The Cork Examiner's* health column (13 November) focused on asthma as a potential killer.

Specialist health writers generally stand out from the prevailing trend which hinders understanding. In the *Sunday Independent* (10 November) columnist Patricia Redlich wrote about children who have a disability or disfigurement. 'We equip them best by first of all making them feel good about themselves, self-confident and self-assured, and we do that by loving them unconditionally...(we need to) make sure that the subject of their disability is never taboo, not harped on but mentioned often enough to give them the opportunity to talk about it whenever they encounter unkindness.'

Items on autism on *Morning Ireland* (RTE Radio 1) and on RTE Cork Local Radio reflected the Irish Society for Autism's efforts. But most attention focused on the society's fundraising exhibition in Dublin (see *Sunday Press*, 10 November, *Evening Press*, 9 November) and, in particular, on the display of the work of Stephen Wiltshire, a young man with autism, who had appeared earlier on *The Late Late Show*, sketching Dublin buildings from memory.

That appearance, representing the chat show's taste for the exotic – Wiltshire is black as well – caused discomfort to at least one mother of a child with autism. *The Irish Times* (12 November) interviewed Mary Gahan about her son Andrew, also autistic and an artist. She described Stephen Wiltshire's Late Late appearance as 'like a circus in which he was expected to perform'.

In a matter-of-fact account, *The Irish Times* related that Andrew Gahan, aged 20, has been drawing and painting since he was eight, has won prizes for his work, was included in a group exhibition in Brussels last year and now has a solo show there. Through art, says his mother, he has developed his confidence. His mother used to look after his work diary. A few months ago Andrew took it over himself.

Andrew Gahan's work went on show at the Guinness Hop Store from 3 December, along with other work by artists with disability. *The Sunday Business Post* (10 November) carried a photograph showing one of the artists involved and a poster ad publicizing the exhibition. The caption story: 'Poster companies More O'Ferrall and David Allen have donated several poster sites, etc.' *The Sunday Business Post* added that the exhibition would tour Europe sponsored by IBM. The sources which make the news were, in this case, the commercial companies.

Autism also featured in *The Nationalist and Munster Advertiser* of Clonmel in a highly localized 'aid appeal' story. The report begins: 'A woman who left South Tipperary to live in London twenty-six years ago has appealed to the people in her home town of Clonmel, etc.' It continues: 'Helen Windsor, the eldest of the Keane family from Baron Park, Clonmel, has issued a heartfelt plea, etc.' Helen 'spends every minute of the day organizing fundraising events', it was reported. Hyperbole is also characteristic of the next category of media representations of disability.

Extraordinary courage

For those with disabilities to become the subject, as distinct from the object, of news stories they need to do things which would be quite out of the ordinary for the able-bodied. It is not enough that they do as well as, or even just better than the average.

In early November *The Irish Press and Irish Independent* (both 5 November) had reported the award to Una Burke of the Junior Chamber International Young Person of the Year award. She had juvenile arthritis while at primary and secondary school, needed dialysis treatment while she was at college and eventually two kidney transplant operations – one a failure, the other, apparently, a success. She later had a hip transplant as the arthritis returned, then another hip transplant.

In between, she graduated from UCD, though neither the Press nor the Independent stated clearly in what subject. She has trained and worked as a Montessori teacher. The Independent added that she hopes to study for an MA — the topic is not indicated. The Independent headline read: 'Brave young girl gets world prize'. Ms Burke is twenty-six years old. Hyperbole, on the one hand, is matched by diminution on the other. Una Burke's undeniably remarkable story was explored again later in *The Irish Times* (30 November). A reader later commented that 'it is discriminatory and perhaps even patronizing to sanctify the courage that people with disabilities often display', though she commended the tone of *The Irish Times* article.

Una Burke first came to media attention in late 1990 when she won a national 'courage' award. Her own reflection, as quoted in the *Irish Press*, was that she was barely aware of showing particular courage until she received the accolade: 'You think you're plodding along on your own and nobody's taking any notice and, to be honest, I wasn't taking much notice myself'.

Addressing the Challenging Images conference, Philip Boxberger, a member of the National Union of Journalists' Disability Working Party, criticized such 'courage' awards and media coverage of them: 'the public's attention is drawn, not to the 'story', but to the fact that the person, the celebrity, is disabled'. Taking the hypothetical case of a disabled artist who receives an award for his/her work, Boxberger suggested that the headline might read, 'Handicapped artist wins major art award'. He contended that 'the attention here is being focused on the disability of the individual rather than on the ability of the artist'.

On cue, the 1991 'courage' award, sponsored by Securicor, was presented the next day. *The Irish Independent* (4 December) highlighted in its headline the blindness of the recipient, law student Richard Daly. The report referred to him as 'Richard' and quoted his mother; Mr Daly is 24 years old. The Irish Press social diary headlined 'Courage award for Richard the Lionheart'. Equally, it referred to him throughout as 'Richard'. (The perhaps unlikely choice of security correspondent to cover the presentation of the award in the *Irish Independent* reflected the alliance that develops between specialist writers and their primary sources.)

The Argus of Dundalk (8 November) had told the story of Kieran Boyle who has been in a wheelchair since a bad motorbike accident six years ago. He went back to study and graduated from Dundalk Regional Technical College. Demonstrating that it was hardly sufficient to have merely completed the course in order to merit attention, *The Argus* underlined that Mr Boyle received the highest points in his class.

The Avondhu of County Cork (14 November) reported Tom Leahy's winning of an individual gold medal at the world championships in boccia, held in Portugal. Tom Leahy was described as a 'paraplegic sports star', leaving it in doubt as to whether he was participating in 'special' sports – he was not, in fact.

Stories of triumph over adversity acquire a particular flavour in the case of children. Dean Smollen, aged 12, was 'plucky little Dean Smollen' and a 'cheeky patient' in the *Evening Herald's* account (9 November) of the County Kildare boy's wait for a kidney transplant.

More often it is the parents who are centre stage. *The Sunday Press* (10 November) carried the episode from Veronica Staunton's book about her daughter Gillian telling of the drama of the parents' rush to Harefield Hospital where young Gillian made medical history as Southern Ireland's (sic) first cystic fibrosis heart and lung transplant patient.

The Nationalist and Leinster Times of Carlow (9 November) reported that 'courageous Carol McFadden ... recently became the first fully disabled person to obtain a degree from Dublin City University'. The report referred to the provision of special facilities for her at her national school and at the accountancy firm where she is training– the implicit question about the previous lack of such facilities was ignored.

Facilities

Stories of inadequate facilities were generally based on statements from public representatives – Councillor John O'Halloran, quoted in the *Evening Herald* (13 November) calling for wheelchair-friendly access to playgrounds, John Dennehy TD quoted in the *Southern Star* (11 November) calling for the extension of facilities for disabled drivers to those who have had a hand amputated and Councillor Con O'Leary of Cork reported in the *Sunday World* (10 November) to be 'campaigning for a fair deal' for part-time home helps employed by the Southern Health Board.

The Leinster Express (10 November) reported that four urban councillors in Athy took to the streets in wheelchairs and found they could not get money from ATMs, could not cross the railway tracks at the station to the southbound platform and much more. The report was one of the few echoes of Wheelchair Awareness Week other than pictures and stories of girl guides collecting (e.g. *The Argus*, 15 November, *The Corkman*, 14 November). *The Star* (13 November), alone among the national papers, reported the presentation to The Square in Tallaght of the National Wheelchair Accessibility Award. That item was also unusual in including a picture of someone in a wheelchair– but Lord Dunraven, president of the Irish Wheelchair Association, is himself a celebrity.

The Star had, like other daily papers, reported the protests of taxi drivers' organizations about the issuing of 100 new taxi plates for Dublin in the days before the period under review. Only *The Irish Times* (11 November) reported the call from the Union of Voluntary Organizations for the Handicapped that preference to be given to applicants who undertake to provide for handicapped passengers.

Gerry Ryan took up the call on his 2FM radio programme, insisting repeatedly that it made good sense that twenty-five of the plates should be reserved for those properly equipped to provide for handicapped passengers. Ryan cited his own taxi-driver in support.

The Cork Examiner (9 November) reported the struggle of a Midleton couple to get assistance in caring for their nine-year-old daughter, said to be severely mentally handicapped, unable to speak and epileptic. In a related feature, it was explained that COPE Foundation is unable to offer places to eighteen mentally handicapped children on the waiting list for its Cork centre because of shortage of funds.

To find media images of those with disability other than images of dependence or suffering, on the one hand, or extraordinary achievement, on the other, it was necessary to look further afield. In a report of Huddersfield Town's 3–2 victory over Birmingham City, *The Guardian* (11 November) recorded that 'it was a cracking afternoon's entertainment, particularly for one visitor sitting next to a Huddersfield supporter with a wooden leg who whacked him with the timber every time Town looked like scoring, which was often'.

South, a Third World business magazine, showed people with disabilities enjoying themselves (August 1991 edition, distributed in November). The picture accompanied a story on Japanese designer Saiko Aika who included brightly coloured wheelchairs and crutches in a fashion show of 100 items from pyjamas to formal party outfits, like the one-piece dresses with 'red lace-trimmed inner bloomers so that disabled women (would) not have to face the embarrassment of showing their legs when someone carries them'.

Saiko Aika found, said *South*, 'the concept that disabled people would want to l ook desirable, or be sexually flirtatious by wearing attractive clothes, was clearly a touchy subject'.

It is certainly a subject far removed from the Irish media's agenda for coverage of disability. And, though it be unconscious and inarticulate, there is an agenda as there is for the construction of news in general: news-gathering techniques and newsroom organization lay down a framework into which the contradictory and unexpected events of the day are fitted day after day. In relation to coverage of disability the agenda is tightly circumscribed and the largely unexamined notion of 'human interest' keeps it that way. Media conventions add their own layer of discriminatory images to the marginalization within society of people with disabilities.

Note: This article is based on a paper delivered to Challenging Images: Perceptions of Disability and the Role of the Media, (2-3 December 1991), a conference organized by the National Rehabilitation Board with support from RTE.

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Not purely an academic matter: Relating critical theory and production practice within media studies

Desmond Bell

> The division between head and hand, and particularly in relation to science and technology, has an importance for bourgeois rule as vital as that of the private ownership of the means of production.
>
> *Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1978: 37)*

Introduction

In this article I explore the relation of critical theory to the teaching of media practice within Media Studies. Or, to reverse the question, I ask in what ways could an enlightened pedagogy of media production engender radical practices of criticism within our Media Studies courses appropriate to the contemporary period?

Teachers and Taught

Media Studies presages the postmodern. Which is to say that as a field of study it finds itself at the interstices of the vectors of technological revolution and cultural implosion characteristic of the current epoch. As a discipline it is a product of the information revolution and in particular the television age. What perhaps distinguishes the field from other disciplines within the Humanities is its relative 'at homeness' with the technological processes, products and patterns of mass cultural consumption. We gleefully observe the collapse of cultural hierarchies and political certitudes that mark our postmodern condition. Yet Media Studies continues to aspire to perform a critical function. In this it betrays its Late Modernist status and incomplete conversion to postmodernist indifference. For the subject is also the product of a counter cultural moment in post-war education. In its pedagogic aspirations and curriculum contents it bears the imprint of the radicalism of the late 1960s.

Today Media Studies is irredeemably a profane affair — whatever its reservations about the hard sell. Our students have distinct vocational expectations and are demanding in their courses relevant practical training to prepare them for an increasingly competitive labour market in the media and cultural industries. Indeed the evidence is that the immense popularity of the subject in third level education (here in 'war torn' Northern Ireland we still get over 700 applicants for the thirty places available on our Media Studies honours course at the University of Ulster) is largely related to the student belief that Media Studies courses are largely of a 'practical character', providing an adequate training in film and broadcasting techniques and practices. Needless to say many of them get quite a shock when they discover the largely academic content of their courses and the theoretical disposition of their new lecturers.

Unlike general arts students who study English Literature or indeed Film Theory, students in Media Studies actually expect to professionally practice what we preach. Though quite where they will practice their 'calling' is somewhat less clear given the current economic climate in the advanced capitalist world.

From the outset Media Studies has been concerned not only with the retrospective appreciation of 'classic' media texts and with the refinement of consumer sensibility but with the education of potential *producers*. Moreover those outside the academy — parents and employers, the state — assume that the subject somehow prepares students for employment in the audiovisual industries. Given the increasingly consumerist orientation of higher education these voices now carry more weight than they did formerly.

However the simple reality remains of course that the majority of lecturers appointed to teach the subject (in the university sector at least) have no professional experience of media production themselves. Nor is such experience necessarily thought of as essential when appointments are made in the subject — except to specialist positions in teaching media production. Moreover, it often seems that many lecturers have an entirely different agenda for the discipline to that held by their students. Perhaps we should at least come clean on this.

For the majority of lecturers in Media Studies believe that the core of their subject resides in critical cultural studies and not primarily in providing professional training. Media Studies, many of us still believe, also involves meeting certain critical responsibilities in the technologically driven university, now functioning as a core infrastructural support of the information economy. As a discipline Media Studies has sought to provide a *cultural critique* of our post-modern condition. Some of us still aspire to throwing the occasional spanner in the works.

Media Studies continues to rest uneasily within the university for a number of reasons. It is interdisciplinary in character in an institution which remains wedded to the idea of the subject specialist. It questions traditional pedagogies and authority structures characteristic of the university. It abandons the notion of a literary canon, of received knowledge and rejects the role of academic criticism as an arbiter of public taste. It rejects in its privileging of the production of meaning over authorship and text, the hierarchical division between mental and manual labour characteristic of the organization of education/training in capitalist society.

And of course, it has proved to be susceptible to the ever present danger of contagion from the very principles of pleasure and desire which pervade popular culture! From the outset Media Studies also distinguished itself from the traditional humanities by declaring its commitment to link theory and practice — though quite what this meant in concrete terms remained, as we shall see, somewhat unclear.

Today Media Studies as a taught subject is characterized by a series of antinomies. The most obvious of these is the *vocational training v critical pedagogy* polarity. We can identify a series of pressures on teachers within both second level and third level education to transform their subject into a series of programmes of vocational training to prepare students for the media and cultural industries. Pitted against this vocationalism are those who strive to preserve the humanities and liberal educational focus of a subject which in the past, at least, sought to espouse a critical pedagogy of social transformation.

Some of the tensions here are of course generational—the *entrepreneurial enthusiasm of the 1990s*, which can fire students, often seems to be ranged against the '1960s type' *radical aspirations* of their lecturers shaped by now tarnished utopian dreams. The *postmodernist ecleticism and post-vangardism* characteristic of the students' 'here and now' directly challenges the *residual modernism and avantgardism* which continues to inspire teachers in their course designs and selection of material. The unabashed celebration of *popular culture* and the anti-theoretical sensibility of the present becomes ranged against the 'unhappy consciousness' of traditional *high culture* and critical theory's deep pessimism about the commodification of culture and loss of artistic autonomy. Lastly, and somewhere at the epicentre of the disturbance, we can identify that most troubling of antinomies for Media Studies — *theory* versus *practice*.

Of course these days everybody within Media *Studies* is in favour of relating theory to practice. Commitment to their integration has become the central piety of Media Studies. Though as Alan Durant has argued, it is far from clear that all who share this act of faith necessarily share the same framework of reference:

> One of the main, formative difficulties of media studies has been its ways of relating reflective theory and on going practice — or to put things in a slightly different way, its ways of deciding whether 'practice' in a study programme means learning a theory; performing critical discourse analysis on given texts or institutions; researching an industry, or making films and tapes.
>
> *(Durant, 1991: 415)*

A review of the history of the discipline reveals that the last of these activities, actual involvement in media production, which common sense might dictate might be the pre-eminent and constructive form of practice in the study of the media has, in fact, been marginalized within the discipline.

The historical development of Media Studies

Since the end of the 1960s the university has struggled to colonize the new forms of popular cultural experience which coalesced around the phenomenon of television. The academy has been fearful of the rupture in cultural heritage which television represented yet anxious to incorporate the medium and the rest of popular culture — rock and youth culture, film, commercial art forms — within its grid of knowledge. From the outset Media Studies was inextricably bound up with the counter-cultural movements of the late 1960s — while at the same time being the product of the academy's appropriation and incorporation of a new field of cultural experience.

The youthful revolts of 1968 initiated a period of ferment in higher education. Students demanded democratic educational reform and that the university should engage with life rather than retreat from it. The student movement of the 1960s challenged social hierarchy and class control whether in politics or knowledge production. This challenge and the responses of the academy to this were to fundamentally shape the development of Media Studies. Those of us who as teachers are now required to police academic knowledge should remember what we once were.

It was the expansion of higher education from the mid 1960s that provided the institutional context for the emergence of courses in Media Studies as it did for a range of other curriculum innovations. By the 1960s the universities were a repository for a Modernism that, as Habermas has put it, was 'dominant but dead'. Modernism in architecture, in literature, music, and in the visual arts, continued to thrive in the seclusion of the university setting as it unravelled as an aesthetic in society at large. The classic strategy of Modernism since the 1920s brilliantly adumbrated by Clement Greenberg, had been to provide a bulwark against the ravages of mass culture and the vulgarly commercial through the adoption of esoteric formal codes and the creation of secured art markets. Modernism as an aesthetic had historically emerged at the same time as mass culture. It represented in many ways a response to the first wave of mass media — photography, the phonograph, the mass circulation newspaper and of course film. Modernism simultaneously assimilated the symbols of mass culture and industrial society — while at the same time distancing itself from commoditization and the popular taste. Media studies — in the form of Film Theory — made its appearance in Higher Education circumscribed by this modernist cultural strategy.

By the late 1960s a number of universities in the UK had developed Film Studies courses usually within the Department of English. In 1973 the British Film Institute assisted its first university lectureship in Film Studies at Warwick University and four years later the BFI listed some fifty-five institutions offering courses in Film Study (1).

With the appearance of the auteur tradition in European cinema, and the belated recognition of the film as the central art form of the twentieth century, film criticism had acquired a new intellectual respectability. Paradoxically, as Garnham (2) noted in 1981, Film Studies became academically respectable precisely at a time when film and cinema had lost their pivotal role within popular culture. The decline of the British film industry also meant that employment opportunities for graduates in film production were virtually non-existent outside broadcasting. Film Studies developed as a retrospective and critical exercise anxious to gain acceptance within the academy.

1. Quoted in Gledhill, 1981.

2. See Garnham, 1981.

Some Film Studies academics believed that the critical practices and cultural sensibilities already developed in the academic reading of English literature — the close reading of texts in their pure immanence, the identification of a canon and defence of good taste in the age of mass culture — could be transferred lock, stock and barrel to the world of film. More sophisticated strategies for reading the filmic text which questioned the film-as-literature approach were to emerge in the late 1970s with the impact of semiology on film criticism. There was also a renewed interest in mainstream Hollywood cinema and popular culture as an ideological terrain. In turn, psychoanalytical, Marxist and feminist critical percepts vied for theoretical dominance within the specialist journals like *Screen* and became common currency within institutions like the BFI. Film theorists struggled to develop a conceptual framework that might adequately link the analysis of the formal properties of the film text to its social conditions of production and consumption. However, as in the introduction of structuralism as a methodology and metaphysic into English Studies, what emerged in fact were new hierarchies of academically legitimated knowledge and new concentrations of theoretical capital.

It is not just coincidence that in the media field not only material resources but also theoretical capital tends to be concentrated in the metropolitan core, with the disparate voices and practical interest of the periphery marginalized within both academic and media discourse. Theory became a practice in and for itself — most noticeably in the Althusserian critical tradition which became highly influential within the *Screen* approach to Film Studies. The Althusserian obfuscation 'theoretical practice' found its way into Media Studies in a structuralist conceit which in fact served to marginalize actual media practice (as indeed it did 'real' political practice). In the Media Studies courses which emerged in the universities during this period, the teaching of 'practical skills' in film and television production, if tackled at all within undergraduate courses, came well down the ladder of status. In this context 'practice' or what is now referred to as 'hands-on experience' (an odd term born not so much out of Cartesian dualism as of the elitist division between mental and manual labour) was often bequeathed to hard pressed and poorly paid junior lecturers, part-time tutors and technicians. Academic careers in Media Studies continued to be made in traditional academic ways — through research, writing and scholarly publication.

Within Media Studies we witnessed, despite the subject's radical credentials, the replication of the social division of intellectual and manual labour characteristic of 'societies of appropriation'. Film theory — increasingly esoteric and removed from the practice of film making — became the prerogative of the university. Conversely, the teaching of production as skill training became concentrated in the technical education sector and in the art colleges. This division continues to this day with art colleges still the locus for craft-based approaches to film making divorced from critical analysis, while universities continue to provide little space for creative, well crafted production work. The craft of production is thereby devalued as its practice becomes divorced from intellectual and critical concerns. On the other hand, abstract theory calcifies as it finds no material medium for its application.

Sometimes it seems as if Media Studies, despite its critical aspirations, has been slow to recognize the material basis conditioning the separation of theory and practice. As Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1978), a contemporary of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin whose work only became known to us in the 1970s, argued in his penetrating essay on

materialist epistemology, it is in the alienation and degradation of labour power in capitalist society that we should locate the material basis of the separation of theory and practice. He reminds us of Marx's analysis of the impact of machinofacture on the labour process:

> the instrument of labour confronts the worker, during the labour process in the shape of capital, dead labour, which dominates and soaks up living labour power. The separation of the intellectual faculties of the production process from manual labour, and the transformation of those faculties into powers exercised by capital over labour is finally completed (3).

3. Karl Marx, Capital Vol I, quoted in Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 124.

I would argue that we have been slow to recognize and challenge the operation of the social division of labour in the operation of our own discipline.

Television and the video revolution

The new centrality of television and the arrival of video technology did present new challenges to traditional pedagogical demarcations. By the 1960s television — together with pop music — constituted the new core of mass culture. Television from the outset was different. It had no canon, it obeyed no clear rules of genre, or narrativity. After all, its schedules are comprised of heterogeneous elements in constant flow. Its products were both more immediate than film and more redundant. Television in other words could not be studied as text, rather as communication flow located within the social totality. Like the newspaper with which it shared certain journalistic practices, it demanded to be studied as an element of the socio-political system as much as part of the cultural. Clearly television was an ideological apparatus as much as an aesthetic form. The empirical social sciences and in particular sociology developed an interest in the linkage between politics and the mass media and with the role of mass communications in securing or undermining the social order. Sociologists recycled themselves as Media Studies specialists. Yet despite the broadening of Media Studies into a wider social science discipline concerned with the study of communication (many of the new courses preferred to use the term Communication Studies because of its wider brief), the teaching of media practice remained marginal to the development of the area.

Significantly where the new subject did develop a practical orientation was, in the first instance, in the polytechnics and art schools rather than in the universities. In the polys there existed a vocational tradition in the areas of journalism, photography, print and graphics, recruiting students now hungry for theory. The polys were more committed to an interdisciplinary approach in course provision and were more at home than traditional university arts faculties with new technology. They had less investment than the universities in high culture or tendency to sneer at the popular. The art schools for their part had adopted many of the pedagogical reforms in art education first pioneered in the 1920s by the Bauhaus in Weimar Germany and had developed a distinctive laboratory approach within which both conceptual issues and technical practices in art and design could be explored in tandem. A model of constructivist pedagogy was being developed in art schools throughout the 1960s and 1970s which might have served Media Studies in the universities better than the traditional humanities approach (4).

4. On Russian Constructivism and its implications for media studies pedagogy see the special edition of Screen devoted to this topic, Screen, 12 (4), Winter 1971/72.

The 1970s saw universities and polytechnics invest heavily in the audio-visual technologies with the aspiration of revolutionizing teaching in Higher Education. The revolution in fact never came. However, the wider availability of slide and film projection, audio and later video recording and editing systems, meant that Media Studies courses, already heavy users of exhibition facilities, could develop production elements in their courses. These were popular with students, and still are, not least because they implicitly provided a radically different model of learning to that normally found in the university.

Over the next decade the significant reduction in the cost of video equipment and the convergence of broadcast and domestic production equipment created the basis for broadening the access to programme making both in the educational system and in the community at large. The development of Channel Four Television, committed to facilitating the emergence of new voices in broadcasting and to innovation in programme production through its independent commissioning policy and workshop scheme, further encouraged a redefinition of television production through the critique of professional hierarchy and dominant modes of representation.

Because of their cost advantages video formats largely replaced 16mm film production facilities in the new Media and Communication Studies courses. Students' artistic aspirations, shaped by the Film Studies agenda, as well as by their viewing preferences, remained however filmic in scope.

Indeed many of these production courses developed in an ad hoc way without any clear pedagogic strategy about how to best use the new video technologies and relate student practice work to the theoretical elements of courses. Courses continuously ran the risk that student expectations, forged in their role as the consumers of the sophisticated output of the film and broadcasting industries and as indentured cultural theorists fed on a diet of avant garde material, might run ahead of our capacities to deliver coherently thought out and adequately resourced media production provision.

Despite the explicit commitment of Media Studies as a subject area to a critique of traditional educational methods little attention was given to developing an innovative pedagogy of media production education. A quick scan of the back copies of *Screen* and *Screen Education*, reveals the almost complete lack of debate on this issue (by my reckoning, just three articles on the problems of teaching media practice in a decade of theoretical speculation). The failure to tackle an issue which often preoccupied teachers of Media Studies in secondary and further education, tokened the remoteness of the *Screen* theorists from the concerns of practising teachers. Media Studies in the universities muddled along with a mixture of traditional chalk and talk 'theory' still primarily concerned with the practice of film criticism rather than with critique and renewal of film practice. Theory all too often only related in the most tangential ways to studio and workshop activity. In turn media production courses often blindly sought to replicate broadcast production routines and formulae — usually journalistically led ones — abandoning all critical practice.

As Alan Durant has argued, a disparity arose between

> oppositional 'critical analysis' traditions and main-stream radio, television and film production. As regards practical work, oppositional theory pairs most directly with kinds of alternative practice: feminist film production, avantgarde work and community media. This emphasis (...) can appear to drive a wedge between the practice element and the industry oriented dimension of media studies.
>
> *(Durant, 1991: 415)*

And, despite the recent re-evaluation and postmodern celebration of popular television in the critical Media Studies literature, there is little evidence that in production courses, students are encouraged to tackle game and quiz shows, soap opera or popular magazine programmes:

> Popular cultural texts are critically celebrated, but not actively contributed to. Instead active contribution continues more to reflect an iconization of popular culture prevalent in theory, and so rejoins avantgarde practice — in effect largely side-stepping recurrent theoretical questions of value when it comes to making, rather than commenting.
>
> *(Durant, 1991: 415)*

Students' desire to have their work published and accepted by 'professionals' or to build up portfolios of technically accomplished work to present to prospective employers, often seems to run counter to our invocations to formally innovate and challenge existing production conventions(5). Both students and teachers continually ask themselves: are these courses primarily some sort of vocational training for those wishing to enter the media industries? Are they arts labs for the free experiment with the new technologies? Or are they workshops for basic arts education in and through the media designed to promote visual literacy, cultural creativity and critical awareness of the production and consumption of media messages in our society?

5. Andrew Goodwin (1985) describes this 'conflict of interest' in his instructive account of teaching media studies at Northern College.

In effect students have been expected to achieve in their project work the very synthesis of critical theory and media practice which eludes lecturers in their course designs. Uncertainty about learning objectives has been transmitted to students and with certain notable exceptions the quality of work produced by students has been lower than one might have expected given the high academic profile of the intake into Media Studies. Production work remained derivative of standard broadcasting current affairs and documentary formats – when it was not trying to mimic avantgarde style or, more recently, the technical wizardry of the rock video.

Media Studies today

Media Studies enters the 1990s then with an expanding academic literature of communication theory and critical methods, with greatly enhanced hardware at its disposal and with media practice courses in place often in response to students' demands for access to production. Yet, the whole question of the relationship of theory to practice within Media Studies and indeed of how production should be taught remains unaddressed. Theorists continue to theorize and practitioners to practice but rarely do the two seem to meet in the studio, cutting room or workshop encounter.

In the absence of a clearly articulated pedagogy for practice, sadly cruder definitions of the learning process have appeared to fill the space between theory and practice. As the communication industries expanded dramatically in the 1980s, colleges came under increasing pressure to tailor their courses to the 'needs of industry'. This was interpreted as entailing an increase in the amount of practice provision on courses — a move students had been demanding for a long time. On the other hand, changes in the structure of government funding for higher education see colleges expected to expand the numbers of students they enroll without any accompanying increase in resources. Underfunding is threatening media practice provision which to be effective needs low staff/student ratios. Put simply, it is more cost effective to teach purely academic courses with teaching provision organized around the traditional large lecture hall than to provide the sort of small group workshop experience required to adequately teach production. Workshop teaching, the tutorial system and individually supervised learning is under threat throughout the art education system in the UK. It seems as if the student-centred educational experiments of the post 1960s period may be foreclosed in the drive for massification and 'education for entrepreneurship'.

Those lecturers who devote large amounts of their time to working energetically with students in the production setting — as we well know, invariably a condition for encouraging good student work — often feel their contribution to be devalued in an institution which placed a premium on traditional bookish learning and published research. The current attempts by governments throughout Europe to assess the 'quality' of universities in terms of the volume of academic publications produced by their staff and the resulting pressure on lecturers to 'publish or perish', can only act as a disincentive to younger lecturers interested in contributing to this demanding area of work. As long as academic careers continue to be made on the basis of the number of scholarly publications one can muster on one's CV, Media Studies lecturers will continue to regard teaching practice as 'unproductive'.

In my own institution one colleague is imaginatively responding to the difficulty of teaching production skills to ever larger number of students by recourse to a form of monitorial system. Student group leaders are selected and introduced to a range of skills in, for instance, radio production, then asked to instruct the other members of their group in these. A nineteenth century solution to a late twentieth century problem !

Other colleagues in Media Studies here and elsewhere have argued against providing any substantial media practice element in university courses either on the grounds that such courses are too expensive to provide or that universities do not have the expertise to teach production to an advanced level. Others argue in a more straightforwardly elitist manner that such courses detract from the academic status of university provision. They do so in the face of students' not unreasonable expectation that they should be able to practice what their lecturers preach. Indeed some lecturers have adopted the tactic of blaming students for wanting increased access to production courses. The argument goes something like this: 'They were told before they came that this was not a practical course so why are they trying to change the educational agenda here'. The irony of this of course is that for many of these lecturers the struggle to change educational agendas was a central part of their own formative experiences as the educational radicals of the early 1970s !

Moreover these new scholastics seem to find it hard to grasp that the almost universal demand of students for access to production facilities and instruction represents a healthy instinct among those we teach. The desire by students to get closer to production and to create as well as criticize, to construct as well as deconstruct — despite all the tremendous material obstacles placed in their way, as in the path of any film maker — seems to me at least, a progressive one. As Brecht recognized a long time ago, there is always something inherently radical and questioning in the act of production when it is given free rein, something which profoundly disturbs the party ideologue and, we might add, the traditional academic.

> Production makes them feel uncomfortable. You never know where you are with production; production is unforeseeable. You never know what's going to come out. And they themselves don't want to produce. They want to play the apparatchik and exercise control over other people. Every one of their cultural criticisms contains a threat. (6)

6 Berthold Brecht quoted in Benjamin, 1977: 118.

I would argue that the media practice laboratory courses and the production work they engender are perhaps one of the most effective ways to achieve the critical goals of Media Studies. Indeed to assert the centrality of media production education to Media Studies is, I believe, to return to the initial radical educational aspirations of the subject. For if we believe, after Michael Young, 'that knowledge needs to be conceived as being *produced in exchange*', rather than being an inert symbolic structure transmitted from teacher to taught, then:

> all agents in its production must be conceived as producers,the divisions between theorising, writing, teaching and learning must be dissolved
>
> *(Young, 1977: 247).*

As I have argued elsewhere (Bell, 1990) through their involvement in the planning, writing, realising and accessing of a piece of video work, or radio programme, photographic essay or short film, students develop their visual communication skills, their competence in the critical reading of media texts and their capacities for both self-expression and cultural interrogation in literary and visual forms. Those who have mastered the fundamentals of construction/production are surely in a better position to tackle the demands of deconstruction/criticism? The video editing process, particularly if it can be opened out in the context of frame analysis into the tutorial room in order to facilitate the critical appropriation of the text under construction, involves a constant balance between these two moments of practice, the productive and critical.

In addition the involvement of students in production brings them up against the material and, in particular, economic constraints which so shape media output. They learn about the management of scarce resources — including their own time. Media production is very exacting in this matter. In turn resource questions raise more structural issues about what we might call the *political economy of the media*, about who owns and who controls the means of production? which ideological codes frame our media? who sets our news agendas? who defines the limits of professional acceptability and polices our conventions of production?

Lastly, media production will be especially important to us here in a peripheralized area like Ireland. In the North of Ireland we experience a situation where most of the political decisions effecting our lives are made elsewhere. We work in an economy characterized by a high degree of economic dependency, both on British public expenditure and on multinational capital. Neither have proved too constant of late. In addition, we experience a high level of *cultural dependency*. We consume media products by and large made elsewhere. Media structures and information flows like economic processes in general are subject to the centripetal force for the metropolitan centre. Establishing media production resources, both in terms of technical facilities and training will play a key role in breaking that cycle of cultural dependency. As Róisín Hogan, responsible for the development of arguably one of the most successful media production courses in Ireland, has argued, without courses which seriously engage with the teaching of media production, Ireland will not have a film industry. Without investment, both financial and intellectual, in teaching film production, Ireland will not have a national cinema.

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Documenting the Troubles: A Question of Perspective

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The main aim of this essay is to analyze British documentary coverage of the conflict in Northern Ireland (NI) with a view to assessing whether there are detectable patterns of explanations across the range of output . The argument has been formed in relation to the discourse of 'Media Studies' research. To this end, there are, it seems to me, three key factors to stress by way of introduction.

In the first place, the essay is a work of interpretation. 'Interpreting Northern Ireland'(1) is a highly partial and problematic business. Historiographical accounts (including such contemporary histories as television news) are of course always value laden. It is axiomatic to say that our political and cultural allegiances create 'ways of seeing' the world which predispose analysts of all sorts and in all societies (officially approved history writers, theorists, journalistic and academic commentators, film makers etc.) to regard and use evidence in particular ways. Documentaries, it shall be argued here, are as selective in their approach as fictions. To the extent that questions of definitional authority are involved, it seems only good sense to appraise documentary works as ideological representation.

1. I am referring here to John Whyte's seminal analysis of the mutually hostile 'one-nation', 'two-nation' and 'no-nation' perspectives (1990).

Second, since forms of expression invariably influence the transmission of ideas (and thus the production of meaning), it is vital that analysis of television documentaries be informed by a critical awareness of the formal characteristics of the programmes under consideration. As is the case with the study of written forms, the style of writing and the generic conventions of the discourse under study (e.g. Shakespearean tragedy, the nineteenth century novel, the war poets etc.) will be affected by the outlook of the author and the age in which the work is produced. For this reason it will be important to distinguish between the major types of television reportage in terms of style, attitude and the relationship to authority.

Third, because the meaning of any given work is ultimately socially determined, at the least, the critic has an obligation to consider the cultural formation within which the 'text' is received. Understanding the peculiarities of the decoding context is a doubly urgent task in a conflictual society like NI where there is a general absence of common codes of public communication.

Documentary Realism and the Truth Game

The term documentary is problematic, as is the whole discourse on realism and representation. That film makers as manifestly dissimilar as Dziga Vertov and Robert Flaherty can with equal merit be claimed as pioneers of the art of documentary film making is indicative of the theoretical and historical complexity of the concept(2). The stylistic differences between Flaherty, Vertov and Riefenstahl are obvious, but what makes them all documentarists? The earliest motion pictures were simple documentaries: workers leaving the Lumière factory; a train arriving at a railway station(3). Both these film fragments are now historic documents. And already the two most common usages of the concept of documentary realism have been introduced: (i) the recording, or documentation, of a real life event 'as it happened'; (ii) the record, or evidence of it having happened. In the first instance, it would seem, the authority of the documentary record rests on the reality of the events recorded by the camera: the categorical requirements of the documentary film is that it can be nonfictional.

2. My key text here is Christopher Williams' documentary digest *Realism and the Cinema: A Reader* (1980).

3. Both *La Sortie des Ouvriers de l'Usine Lumière* and *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare* were screened at the first paying performance of the Lumière programme, Paris, 28 December 1895 (C.W. Ceram, 1965: 149-50).

Where there is a will to 'show things as they really are', cinema and television have an advantage over other representational modes. The actuality of the documentary film is apparently guaranteed by the accuracy of its technical reproduction: the image looks real and therefore is true. Here, in an instant, however, an elision has occurred between the first and second uses of the idea of documentary (the recording/documentation, and the record/evidence). Technical and philosophical senses of 'truthfulness' have collapsed into a tautologous relationship. John Grierson's well known, but self-contradictory, definition of the documentary film is typical. In his esteemed opinion, the 'creative treatment' (position and use of camera, framing, lighting, music, commentary, pace of editing etc.) of actuality is somehow or other rendered transparent (such that 'mechanical reproduction' is believed not to intrude upon or influence the viewers' understanding of what they see).

For analytical purposes, it is vital that we insist on the formal separation of these two senses of documentary truth. The conventions of documentary realism alter through time and from place to place (some methods becoming more naturalized, or dominant, than others), but at the end of the day the common link in film history between documentaries of all description is the overriding ambition to show things as they really are. It is no accident that 'Kino Pravda' and 'Cinéma Verité' both translate into English as cinema truth. Thousands of miles apart in their theory and practice, the distance between Riefenstahl and Vertov is ultimately the distance between two worldviews. It is primarily a question of perspective. The manners and attitude of *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929) are patently at odds with those of *Triumph of the Will* (1935), but the aspiration of both film makers, it cannot be doubted, was to tell the truth as they saw it (limited only by the technological means at their disposal).

More than mere verisimilitude, the aim of the typical documentary realist is to reveal the essence of the subject under study. Yet, depending on the choice of subject matter, of course it cannot always be possible for the film maker 'to be there' (in the technical sense). Let us say for the sake of argument an 'historic' event has occurred without the presence of a film camera (the storming of the Winter Palace in October 1917, for example). Striving to reach the inner truth of it (in the philosophical sense), in these circumstances, the reporter (documentarist) may legitimately choose to dramatize or reconstruct evidence, or use other artificial devices (such as suggestive montage, music, slow motion) while, in principle, remaining loyal to the realist ideal. To this extent, Eisensteinian montage or the Nouvelle Vague can be described as anti-realist methods, but realist in their endeavour to uncover the true nature of their respective objects of enquiry(4). In most cases, the documentary film maker is driven by the ambition and/or belief that in fashioning his/her argument in a documentary manner, the viewer (reader) of the film-text will respond to it as one which is more authoritative, convincing, 'factual' even, than the other types of representation.

In other words, the prime motive force of the documentary enterprise is interpretation of the material. The attitude justifies the means of representation. Thus at the present time there are a range of documentary styles and genres, including various types of poetic realism, historical drama, or drama-documentary (often these are socially realistic, issue-based fictions) that do not comply with the first rule of nonfiction film.

'Sticking to the facts' is not an essential requirement of documentary representation. Over time, as certain stylistic conventions become associated with the documentary project (for instance, high-contrast, black and white photography), the techniques themselves come to signify 'documentaries' (Caughie, 1981). Consequently, although it may not seem a helpful distinction to make at this stage, documentaries need not be nonfictions. On fuller reflection, it is clear that even the first nominally denotative usage of the concept of documentary introduced above (recording/documentation) is predicated upon taking up a position (in the rudimentary sense of assuming a point of view), while the second usage (record/evidence) necessarily involves manufacture. And so, despite the 'naive' claims to the contrary, we must conclude that nonfiction films are always constructed. Representation is not real life. In the last analysis, the 'truthfulness'

4. In this manner, Brecht too was a realist.

'Realism is not a pure question of form. Copying the methods of these realists, we should cease to be realists ourselves ... time flows on ... Methods wear out, stimuli fail. New problems loom up and demand new techniques. Reality alters; to represent it the means of representation must alter too (1974: 110).'

of one film document over another does not depend on the technical accuracy of the apparatus of television. Rather, arguments tend to be settled on the basis of the authority of the reporter — whether institutionally authorized or individually authored.

Towards a typology of documentary coverage

From an analytical standpoint, television journalism has to be appraised apart from documentary coverage of the conflict in NI. Bearing the imprimatur of the broadcast institutions and occupying a sizable chunk of mainstream television, it is inevitable that 'news & current affairs' coverage will closely reflect the prevailing consensus of leading opinion in political society (Schlesinger et al., 1983: 34-69). Similar in scope and purpose to broadsheet Sunday newspaper (in principle analyzing 'the stories behind news'), documentary current affairs series – *Panorama, World in Action, This Week* – follow a news agenda and operate according to journalistic values. Current affairs programmes may thus be categorized as institutional documentaries. This is a basic distinction. Television journalism is constitutionally obliged to be balanced and impartial as between the major interests in the state and society. Conscious all the while of charges of bias, current affairs reportage must aim to achieve a formally neutral, as far as possible styleless, mode of presentation. (It would be more accurate to say they use thoroughly routinized codes of conventions.) In the average current affairs film report the visual track is required to do no more than illustrate the narration. Current affairs documentaries privilege the 'spoken word'. They are more essayistic than filmic in their approach. As with news presentations, ordinarily there is no place in current affairs television for 'symphonic' techniques (the use of suggestive music or symbolic pictorial juxtapositions etc.). 'Death on the Rock' (Thames: 28 April 1988) is a case in point. Due to the obvious sensitivity of the subject matter, the programme makers were at extreme pains to avoid loaded formal devices. 'Death on the Rock' is a stylistically sparse piece. The 'reconstruction' scenes in particular are stripped down to a laborious image-for-word literalness.

Where they appear in the schedules, other non-institutional documentary films (it is an ugly categorization, but has the benefit of being analytically precise) will usually have been commissioned as 'individual' and/or 'artistic' statements. As far as it is helpful to generalize about a diverse range of material, authored documentaries tend to be issue-based and discursive (they all have 'something to say' on a given subject or theme). Authored documentary films make up only a very small, though still prestigious, amount of British television output. The critical point is that they are licensed (even encouraged) to be politically and/or stylistically unconventional. Permitted to represent viewpoints from outside the mainstream of current affairs television, in a manner that is formally arresting, this group of films can be further subdivided between essayist and 'poetic' approaches (the former usually made by campaigning journalists or notable polemicists and the latter by politically committed film makers, or others from an 'art' background). (See Table 1)

Reporting the conflict: the good, the bad & the ugly

Three years prior to 'Death on the Rock', the postponement and eventual broadcast of *Real Lives*, 'At the Edge of the Union' (due to be shown in July, the film went out in October 1985) managed to generate a political controversy of even larger dimension. In a manner analogous to the transmission of the 'Question of Ulster' in early 1972, both these films have had far reaching effects on the broadcasting organizations' relationship to the state power. Stylistically, though, they are quite different animals. Planned as one of six of a series, 'At the Edge of the Union' is an authored documentary. The 'preferred reading' of Paul Hamann's film is contained in the introductory voiceover. As the camera tracks across a graveyard (signifying 'timelessness' and referencing back to previous documentaries about the NI conflict) we are informed:

TABLE 1
A Naming of Parts

All documentary representation is in some sense evidential. All documentary modes (including documentary-drama and dramatized reconstruction) use film-evidence as a means of authorizing the documentarist's point-of-view (the *technical* veracity of the mechanical reproduction of real life events is believed to legitimize a *philosophical* sense of 'documentary truth').

Defined this way, in terms of a common *attitude*, the documentary project may be characterized as an ambition 'to show things as they really are' (Williams, R. 1983: 257-62).

On this basis we may say that the *style* of documentary films tends to vary between:

DIRECT MODE OF ADDRESS (MOA)	INDIRECT MODE OF ADDRESS
Where commentary acts as the organizer of all other discursive elements in the text	Where film-evidence appears to 'speak for itself (i.e. the subject is apparently unaware of being filmed)
Commentary may take various forms: descriptive; lyrical; argumentative etc.	Mise-en-scène and montage are charged with responsibility for ordering and signifying the production of meaning.

For analytical purposes, it is possible to identify two major types of documentary reportage. These are:

FILM-ESSAY	FILM-POEM
Primarily Direct MOA	Primarily indirect MOA (where there is narration it will be of a lyrical nature)
Expositional	Evocative
Didactic: Argument and evidence marshalled in 'quasi-tautological' relationships to maximize pedagogic impact.	'Symphonic': Auditory-visual material orchestrated towards an 'apotheosis of form' *(Spottiswoode, 1950: 281)*

The purpose and formal properties of institutional and non-institutional documentaries are quite different:

NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS TELEVISION	FEATURES DOCUMENTARIES
Institutionally authorized	'Individually' authored
Event based (follows news agenda)	Issue based/discursive
Journalistic/primacy of 'spoken word'	Filmic/visual values
Central to TV schedules	Marginal
Reflective of dominant opinion	Licensed to be provocative
Stylistically neutral: image-for-word	Style and /or Attitude

> The city of Londonderry is where the present Northern Ireland troubles began sixteen years ago. It is an increasingly polarized city with public support for the extremes on both sides. This film looks at those extremes through the eyes of two men. Both young working class, teetotal, church going, elected representatives, members of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The key phrases here are: the present NI troubles (by concentrating on the internal dimensions of the conflict, the author exonerates the British role); increasingly polarized (the 'problem' exists because there is no British style middle ground); consequently support grows for the extremes on both sides (both men are consigned to a place outside the parameters of reason and 'responsibility', they are equally extreme in their views and equidistant from moderate opinion); through the eyes of two men (the category of the individual is to be the model of explanation).

'At the Edge of the Union' is impeccably 'balanced'. More than that, the film is rigidly symmetrical. Each scene highlighting McGuinness's perspective is matched by a comparable sequence representing Campbell's. But although Gregory Campbell makes more allusions to the use of violence than Martin McGuinness, when Lady Faulkner condemned the programme for the way it 'sanitized terrorism', and Leon Brittain complained it was a 'succour to terrorism', both were expressing alarm at McGuinness's presence in the film. The 'minor amendments' of which Alisdair Milne spoke were intended to rebalance it, against McGuinness. Of the changes made, the insertion of twenty seconds or so of library film showing scenes of carnage and destruction wrought by an IRA bomb (Bloody Friday, 21 July 1972) into the midst of a scene of McGuinness in a domestic setting, is by far the most significant addition. For the governors and the government, the 'humanizing' of McGuinness was objectionable because of the special ideological purchase of 'ordinary family man', and points up the film's central dilemma. McGuinness's home environment is comfortably domestic. He is seen to be 'of his community'. Walking unmolested amongst them, he drives his own car and plays on the beach with the children.

Campbell on the other hand is static and confined, incarcerated in his fortress home. Seemingly obsessed with denouncing McGuinness, he speaks darkly of 'dealing with' republicans. McGuinness, by contrast, makes no reference to Campbell whatsoever. Limiting his comments to attacking what he considers the signal cause of conflict, the British state in Ireland, Ulster Unionism is notable only by its absence from his analysis. Overall, on the basis of the content of the programme, it is Campbell who appears the more 'extreme' of the two men. By inviting comparison between the merits and demerits of two men the film reduces the ideologies they stand for to an emblematic contrast between their personal attributes. Though probably more by accident than design, in balancing Campbell's vitriolic brand of politics with McGuinness, in part at least, the film undermines the intended blackguarding of McGuinness. The film's main failing, then, from officialdom's point of view, was not how it dealt with McGuinness, but that it dealt with him at all. In its earnest (and patronizing) endeavour to lay bare the tragic irony of the symmetry between loyalism and republicanism, the film admitted a point of view normally excluded from the realms of reasonable opinion.

The contemplative approach of 'At the Edge of the Union' has long since been banished from current affairs television. In all likelihood, had the programme been subject to the procedures routinely applied to BBC analysis programmes – *Panorama*, or *On the Record* – it has to be doubted the idea would have progressed beyond the commissioning stage (the whole point of the reference-up process is to head off potential problems). Resulting from twenty years of voluntarism, capitulation and latterly outright censorship, like the imprint of a stubborn stain, British reportage has become ingrained with stereotypical themes and motifs. Foremost amongst these, it is virtually obligatory for any programme proposing to be sceptical of government policy to begin by decrying IRA terrorism as the cause of the conflict. The lengthening of 'Death on the Rock' to a forty-five minute slot from *This Week's* customary twenty-seven minutes was

unquestionably due to the company's urgent concern to underline the 'hostile editorial stance of the programme towards the IRA and its methods' (Windlesham, 1989: 24).

The broadcast media's hypnotic obsession with IRA violence has skewed the terms of representation in particular ways. Television journalism takes it for granted that Britain is a disinterested party, acting in the role of honest broker. In this way, protestants and catholics are cast as morally equivalent, equally anachronistic 'warring tribes'. The British state's activity in Ireland is not seen to be an aspect of the problem. Due also to the overwhelming concentration on republican terror, unionism and loyalism (including loyalist violence) have commanded only the passing interest of British journalism (Butler, 1991). The attitude towards Gregory Campbell in 'At the Edge of the Union' is fairly typical of the syllogistic logic underscoring British coverage of NI: McGuinness is to blame; Campbell is equivalent to McGuinness; Campbell is also to blame. Increasingly, since the onset of 'the Troubles', this dominant modality elides representation of the conflict into continual re-runs of the Good (British arbitration), The Bad (Sinn Fein and the IRA), and (in a supporting role) The Ugly (Paisley et al.).

In current affairs television, as a matter of rote, republicanism is demonized and cast out. Now and again, however, British broadcasting has (for specific reasons) permitted an airing of alternative and, occasionally, oppositional perspectives on Ireland. It would be a mistake to expect these films to be automatically less rigid in their style and attitude than conventional journalistic material. Indeed, odd as it may seem, for the most part, British leftist analyses of Ireland have tended to reproduce the dominant mode of reasoning. The 'socialist' syllogism functions as follows: a residual British 'imperialism' is the source of the problem; unionists represent (as agents, dupes or infidels) the colonial legacy; unionism/ loyalism is the problem. From here it is a short step to the conclusion that since 'the cause of labour is the cause of Ireland' (socialist advance is coterminous with nationalist ambition), loyalist working class opposition is irrational, ill-founded and, as a result, can be seen to be a false consciousness.

A passionate advocate of the rights of 'oppressed' minorities, Mike Grigsby is a documentary film maker of the highest renown. His naturalistic style of directing sharply illustrates the paradoxical nature of the documentary enterprise. On the one hand his work is self referentially non-interventionist. It claims (in Griersonian fashion) to let the material 'speak for itself'(5). The principal guarantee of this supposed veracity is the indirect manner of filming, the use of especially long long-takes, and static, tableaux camera set-ups. Yet, at the same time, Grigsby is a supremely accomplished manipulator of the form. He is particularly adept at over dubbing images to stress preferred meanings. In his film 'The Silent War' (1990) for C4's documentary series *True Stories*, there is a scene centred on the journalistic coverage of the burial of a young catholic man killed by a plastic baton round in Belfast. Grigsby's camera is situated at a distance from the tidy council house from which the coffin will soon appear. Milling around, chatting to one another, is a large contingent of newspaper and broadcast journalists. As the pall bearers raise the coffin up, the reporters and photographers crowd in preventing the cortege from moving off. All the while Grigsby's camera is still, observing the undignified scramble. The click and whir of automatic cameras is overwhelmingly loud. The sequence ends on a long-view of the house, deserted now, a black flag flutters. At this point a tannoy announcement of the departure of the British Airways flight to London sequels to a shot of the airplane high in the sky, arching off into the distance.

'The Silent War' is a consummate, if repetitive, film-poem, made in a manner strongly reminiscent of the best work of Humphrey Jennings. The themes and techniques are by now quite familiar. Without knowing for certain, I would be prepared to wager that the soundtrack of the intrusive cameras has been heightened, much in the way that a montage sequence in an earlier work 'Too Long a Sacrifice' (Central, 1984) opens with the resounding crunch of a British soldier's boot, disturbing a flock of birds. The point made by these sound-image montages is clear enough, in a word, *invasion*. In spite of the naturalist filming and the conspicuous absence of journalistic codes (especially

5. Grigsby seems unaware of the self-contradictory relation between the choice of a self-reflexively naturalist style of film making and a politically committed attitude. The paradox is ably demonstrated in the following quotations: 'I think that television has a tendency to swamp many of its films with reporters' questions and with a commentary, with a result that one is never allowed to feel, one is unable to breathe, and one is being led all the time as an audience; one is not being allowed to draw one's own conclusion from the material that is there in front of you because the commentator is there between you and the subject, actually telling you what to think.But it is important that one really tries to let people be what they are, and to come across in a way they want to come across, and we as film-makers should not impose our attitudes in commentary or voice-over on other people. One has to take a side. As a film-maker one has to identify with one situation, one issue,one group of people. As a film-maker you have to take a stand and say, this is the film I want to make, these are the situations I want to identify with, these are the issues that concern me, and go in a straight line and do it. So yes, of course, this is a political issue'. In interview with Julian Petley (1981).

commentary), Grigsby's films are no less directed towards a particular interpretation than any other cited here. It is arguable, indeed, that because his viewpoint is embedded in the grammar of the film (at a metalinguistic level, so to speak), the authorial message is all the more convincing.

David Fox is an Irish documentary film-maker bedded in an 'anti-treaty' tradition. His films, like Grigsby's are stylistically indebted to the British documentary films of the 1930s and 40s. And like 'The Silent War', Fox's 'Trouble the Calm' (1989) ably points up the paradox of documentary realism. Fox is a picturist. His work is expertly crafted.'Trouble the Calm' is organized around a succession of striking visual patterns and allegories, so much so that the film lacks narrative coherence. His thesis simply put, is that while the Republic wholeheartedly embraces multinational capital, it ignores and represses the inheritors of the true republican tradition in contemporary Ireland. Worse still, in his opinion, the Irish government connives with Britain to extradite republican prisoners to stand trial in NI.

One scene, in particular, forcefully demonstrates his attitude and technique. At the Bodenstown Easter commemoration recalling the heroic deeds of Ireland's 'soldiers of destiny', the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, is giving the annual oration at the graveside of Wolfe Tone. Fox has a point to make. All but hidden from view by the assembled crowd of listeners, Haughey boasts of Ireland's rapid economic integration into the world economy. Positioned at considerable distance from the gathering, the camera tracks around the scene. Though visually diminutive, Haughey's words are clearly audible, interrupted only by a dull rhythmic thud on the soundtrack. As the speech progresses and the camera's graceful arc takes us further away from the scene, there are a series of cutaways to a gang of labourers digging a grave. They pause, look up, seem to listen for a second, then continue with their work, apparently unimpressed. The irony of the sequence is delicious. Rarely could a metaphor have been more vividly rendered: 'capitalism is its own gravedigger'. When questioned about the construction of the scene (at a screening of the film at the University of Ulster at Coleraine), Fox confirmed that the two sets of actions had not occurred contemporaneously. He only had one camera operator at his disposal. But this wilful manipulation of the material is not at all mendacious (his company is called Faction Films). Fox is doing no more than endeavouring 'to show things as they really are', to tell the truth as he sees it. Within the discourse of documentary realism, where argument ultimately legitimates the formal presentation of film evidence, the use of this evocative device is therefore perfectly acceptable as nonfictional representation.

There is, I am suggesting, a detectable undercurrent of syllogistic reasoning in British attitudes to NI – in the mainstream and alternative reportage – which produces particular ideological effects. At the periphery, due primarily to the romantic 'anti-imperialist' imagination of a section of the British left, in recent years there have been a few independently produced television documentaries presenting a 'Troops Out' critique (most recently, Geoff Bell's 'Pack Up Your Troubles' (C4, 1992).

In contrast the cause of Ulster Unionism has singularly failed to inspire valorizing documentary treatments. This is an intriguing question: why is it that loyalism cannot excite the passionate advocacy of a political film maker of the stature and expertise of Michael Grigsby or David Fox? The explanation, I think, lies in the peculiar nature of loyalists' image problem in the British media. The politics of loyalism are not readily defensible within the limits of contemporary political discourse. Tom Paulin:

> If you were to take the cultural cringe factor in terms of Britain's view of the loyalists ... there is this detestation because it reminds so many British people of what they thought they had put behind them, or what they've suppressed under illusions of gentility and decency ... It is important to remember ... loyalism represents ... a kind of parody of British imperialism. It uses certain imperialist insignia and it seeks to enshrine the imperialist mission in certain images (6).

6. Cited in 'Imagined Communities', a television documentary in C4's off-beat *Without Walls* arts strand based on Benedict Anderson's classic text by the same name.

And although there have been a couple of attempts to counter loyalism's generically negative identification, these have, by and large, tended to be defensive and apologetic explanations rather than robust political arguments in favour of their case. Sympathetic treatments of loyalism, even those originating in the local context, tend not to take a directly political form. Operating from a base within the independent sector, John T. Davis has now produced a body of stylish and enigmatic portraits of aspects of the religion and cultural life of Ulster protestants. 'Power in the Blood' (1989) was commissioned for BBC2's prestige arts documentary series *Arena*. The film follows Vernon Oxford's 'healing mission' from his home in Franklin, Tennessee to NI. Oxford is an old-time country singer and fundamentalist preacher. Along the way he ministers to a huge throng of enthusiastic born-again christians, sings in a loyalist drinking club on the Shankill road, mixes freely with evangelical street singers on the *Eleventh Night* (11 July) in Sandy Row, ventures south of the border, where he saves a few souls by means of the 'laying on of hands', preaches in Darkley Pentecostal Hall, rounding off with an emotional visit to his friend, and convicted murder, Wilfie Cummings, at the Maze Prison.

The film brims with unsettling and strikingly asymmetrical compositions, long takes, and gazing, indeed voyeuristic, camera movement. The film has no other narration than Vernon Oxford's conversations, personal reflections, his music, and one or two informational captions. Whatever message (intentional or otherwise) the film contains is conveyed indirectly. On one level, it could reasonably be argued, that by handling them in a 'modish, technically perfect way', the film transforms these troubling incidents 'into an object of enjoyment' (Benjamin, 1982: 24), thereby sanitizing their political meaning. The absence of commentary would seem to confirm, like the dog that would not bark, that Davis's film wishes to avoid analyzing the sectarian content of the material by not addressing it directly.

The suspicion appears to be borne out by the promotional literature. Claiming that the film faithfully portrays features of protestant working class life routinely 'under-represented, if not misrepresented, by the media', we are told that:

> 'Power in the Blood' is a film about them, and the way they look at the world. It observes them with candour and sympathy; it shows them in their colours – more various and rich than the standards of red, white and blue.

Here, yet again, is the realist index, the ambition to reveal the truth. One has to wonder, though, whether the writer of this description is talking out of the side of his or her mouth. For despite the ostensible sympathies, the effect of the filming is anything but flattering. To take one typical scene, Oxford is preaching to a jam-packed gathering in what appears to be a converted cinema. Holding a bible close to this face, he repeats an elementary phrase in the manner of a crude incantation (not unlike the phrasing of a Van Morrison song). Oxford wears narrow reading glasses. Perspiring heavily, his face is contorted. He is filmed from an acute low angle, in big close-up. Due to the dim red theatrical lighting in the hall, and because of the way his glasses – perched low on his nose reflect the light, his eyes look positively demonic.

As politicians, photographers and cinema-goers know full well, to position a camera low beneath a subject is to invite connotations of 'monstrousness', indicating, at the least, 'this is a sinister or dubious character'. I am bound to say that the framing of this and other scenes do not suggest this film – and even more so its companion piece 'Dust on the Bible' (DBA for C4,1980) – is uncritically sympathetic towards Ulster protestantism. On mature reflection, 'Power in the Blood' is an ambivalent, double-coded text; probably deliberately so. Adapting Godard's maxim to the discourse of documentary representations of NI, though not a directly political film-essay, 'Power in the Blood' has been made politically, with awareness of the meaningfulness of the form. (7).

7. One of the slogans of the Dziga Vertov group: 'The problem is not to make political films but to make them politically' (cited in MacCabe, 1980: 19). I am not suggesting that Davis (or DBA) shares Godard's ultra-left avantgardism, only that the po-faced claims of the promotional literature to represent protestants in their 'true colours', may be a double code. It is difficult to see how a film-maker of Davis's obvious mastery could not be conscious of the damning connotations of some of the images in his film.

The peculiarities of the local formation

The logical contradictions of David Hammond's 'Steel Chest, Nail in the Boot, and the Barking Dog' (Flying Fox Films for C4 1987) arise more from the attitude than the style of film making. The recipient of the major prize at the Celtic Film Festival the year before, this too is a lyrical 'features documentary'. In the opening sequence an inter-title announces the film 'A Story of the People, told by the People'. In the first instance 'Steel Chest' thus represents itself as a WEA-type (Workers' Education Association –eds.) 'oral history' project. Hammond's film is an affectionate portrayal of authentic working class community and a celebration of collective labour, but the 'of/by' frame of reference, laying claim to formal transparency, is untenable. The artifice is not all unobtrusive. On the contrary, the film's technical presentation has been elaborately and lovingly fashioned. Its approach is a long way from the gritty social realism more usually associated with documentary depiction of working class life. 'Steel Chest' is neither in the 'problem solving' or story-documentary mode. Made up of an accumulation of interviews with present and former employees of the Harland & Wolff shipyard, ordered by a quasi-poetical narration, ethereal music and richly photographed (by David Barker, who also photographed 'Power in the Blood'), slowly paced, rhythmic montage, it is more in the manner of a nostalgic evocation. Contained here are accounts of gruesome industrial injuries and life-shortening working conditions, yet the interviews focus on the men's fond memories of comradeship as expressed in terms of their recollections of nicknames (providing the film title).

One result of this anecdotal framework is that the film ignores capital-labour relations and, significantly in a television documentary addressing the labour history of the Belfast shipyard, by looking at practices in a romanticized way, avoids the thorny question of sectarianism in the workplace. Remembering all the while that civil society in NI is highly politicized, the net effect of introducing 'aesthetics into political life' (Benjamin, 1973: 243) is to render the protestant workforce politically unproblematic and psychologically inoffensive.

It is quite likely that the film's resounding silence on the exclusivist traditions of the Harland & Wolff yard gave rise to more than a little scepticism among northern viewers. In essence, Hammond's film promotes a folkloric thesis, stressing the organic integrity of working class community and culture (demonstrated by the supportive role of women and children and by the performance of traditional shanty songs), thereby implicitly countering the routine nationalist jibe that unionists have no culture. However, when scrutinized in the fraught dissensual circumstances of civil and political life in NI, in other respects 'Steel Chest' lends itself to a one-nation interpretation. In NI 'folk' customs do not inhabit a neutrally 'civic' and secularized public sphere.

On the contrary, culture in NI is sectarian. The folk tradition is intrinsic to the nationalist discourse. In the main, whether everyday users think it or not, the 'Irish' language, music, sports, dance and other 'traditional' arts act as the ideological cement of an exclusive cultural nationalism. Ulster protestants are either viewed hostilely, as intruders, 'planters' without a claim to the territory they presently occupy and without an identity of their own, or benignly, as the dupes of English colonialism who continue to misrecognize their true identity. Neither model (including nominally 'pluralist' versions), acknowledge legitimate cultural difference. In this mode of thinking loyalist antipathy to 'gaelic' forms is held to be evidence of their rootlessness, while non-catholics who demonstrate interest or expertise in 'folk' idioms are taken to be expressing their (thirty-two county) Irishness.

To some, my analysis of 'Steel Chest' will appear cynical and, perhaps, aberrant. The key surely, as John Keane notes, is that we are all 'situated interpreters'; we (the producers, consumers and theorists of the media) may well make our own historical readings, but not in circumstances of our choosing (1991: 38). In recent years the recognition that meaning is arrived at via what John Tomlinson (1991: 49–50) calls 'a social process of viewing and discursive interpretation', and that crucially,

> audiences are more active and critical, their responses more complex and reflective, and their cultural values more resistant to manipulation and 'invasion' than many critical media theorists have assumed

has transformed media research in these islands. Tomlinson's cautionary observations are especially apt here in NI, where every element of cultural production is carefully interrogated for undeclared intentions; where, in short, every signifier is spoken for. The stark reality of it is that in the Northern Irish context it is irrelevant to speak of 'common ground' (Goldring, 1991: 144-63). Just as the designations of left and right-wing, as traditionally understood, are inapplicable, in NI there can be no neutral language, verbal or visual, no uncontested images, and certainly no unifying imagery. Intentionally or other-wise, in proposing a vaguely folkloric thesis and by emitting other contradictory signals, Hammond's text promotes an irredentist reading.

The interpretation of 'Steel Chest' suggested here is not available outside the local configuration, nor is it a subliminal Trojan horse, rather it is an emblematic illustration of the absence of agreed codes and of the co-existence of mutually hostile perspectives in NI. Alongside the implacable 'siege mentality' of the unionist zeitgeist, the 'damned if you do, damned if you don't' attitude of cultural nationalism (described above) frustrates the emergence of feasibly non-sectarian forms in cultural expression. In the last instance, moreover, the petrification of history and culture in NI accounts for the staleness and predictability of iconography of the Troubles.

In general, coverage of NI display a depressing dependence on second-hand motifs, visual and thematic, which mars all but the most painstaking and imaginative representations. And this is also the root of the problem for broadcasters, the makers of fiction and documentary films and academic analysts alike: how does one go about representing 'culture and identity in NI' in ways which avoid depoliticizing their seamier aspects while at the same time not falling into the trap of reliance on cliché (8)?

8. This and other questions were discussed at the Cultural Traditions symposium held at the University of Ulster at Coleraine, 21 February 1991 (see McLoone, 1991).

A case in point is the documentary report 'Parallel Lines' made for BBC2's community access slot *Open Space* in 1987. This short film is of critical interest precisely because it sets itself the aim of resisting the conventional iconography of the Troubles. Despite an ostensibly 'non-professional' status, the programme is presenter-led, employs a full crew and has high production values (notably the photography of David Barker, again). Like 'At the Edge of the Union' the film uses the bipolar format. The purpose, we are told in the opening segment, is to take 'a look at the two identities... that exist here' through the eyes of 'two young people from Belfast'.

The young people concerned (both university students, a protestant unionist male and a catholic nationalist female), are apparently very keen to get away from the normal stereotypical image that is portrayed here. They've got ideas of where they'd like to film and places they'd like to go. It is significant therefore that contrary to this laudable ambition, the film finds itself reusing the very same visual and thematic stereotypes which, we were assured, it was determined to avoid. Given the power over their own image, she locates herself in the countryside, amidst ancient ruins, pictured by a drystone wall and silhouetted against a scene of bucolic beauty(9). Invoking the traditional nationalist myth of longevity ('the dead generations'), she speaks of 'thousands of years' of uninterrupted nationalist culture. He, equally true to form, claims industrial Belfast and the City Hall. And on this occasion when the Orange band appears, as appear they must in a film wishing to explain culture, is it an accident that they are out of uniform (as if mufti softens the conventionally negative referent)? Not only are all the signifiers spoken for, but like Ulster's politicians these young protagonists are unable to find a semiologically neutral location in which to meet. Their discourse, hostile and at cross purposes is filmed as they sit in the backseat of a car speeding around Belfast's trouble spots. The only other point at which their paths converge is under an emblematic umbrella in the film's title sequence. To its great credit the film refuses an integrationalist closure. The parallel lines they represent, we may reasonably deduce, run side by side, but never meet.

9. The enduring significance of the iconography of the country/city divide in cinematic depictions of Ireland (where the countryside is represented as an 'escape from modernity') is analyzed in depth by Luke Gibbons in his section of *Cinema and Ireland* (1987 194-249).

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The Nordic model of broadcasting liberalization

Olof Hultén

Several routes towards the development of a more market oriented broadcasting system can be identified in Europe. Well known are the cases of Italy (de jure regulated laissez faire), France (detailed programme regulations, liberal commercial conditions) and Germany (strictly regulated public service, liberal conditions for private stations). The British case is yet another approach, familiar to Irish readers, with its belief in moulding the market forces into providing traditional British quality television.

The four small Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, with a total population of approximately 22 million people, have created a discernably different model of broadcasting liberalization of their own. This Nordic way is founded on traditionally high aspirations in the fields of culture, information and education and the idea that radio and television are important elements of the social infrastructure, not only designed to serve the market economy.

This article will describe, very briefly, how these four small countries have moved from the old public service monopoly in broadcasting to a cautious introduction of competition by private operators and of commercial financing of new radio and television stations.

Table 1 gives a summary of the present structure of radio and television. Television is characterized by carefully controlled commercialization. There are external and internal pressures to further liberalize the system but the dominant political position is still one of keeping television firmly within the cultural domain. Radio seems to be less of a problem from a content point of view. The main concern is on ways of keeping the medium decentralized, i.e. preventing it from coming under a unified private ownership and editorial control.

Denmark

The debate on how Danish viewers could be provided with more television than that supplied by Danmarks Radio's (DR) single public service channel began several decades ago. In Denmark, as in other small countries, television channels from neighbouring countries were received by an increasing number of viewers by means of large community antennae systems in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The provision of a second Danish channel looked promising in terms of preventing audience erosion and of offering a domestic alternative. For many years advertising as a source of finance was not seriously contemplated. On the other hand the licence fees could not sustain the costs of the second channel.

1983, however, saw the introduction to Parliament of a Bill for a new TV2, a Bill which was based on the recommendations made by a broadcasting commission. A decision on the introduction of TV2 was made in 1986 and the channel started in October 1988. There are several reasons for the long gestation period of TV2. Firstly, there was the question of whether or not enough advertising money was available in the country to sustain a new channel. Secondly, it was unclear as to what kind of a station TV2 should be. Thirdly, there was concern as to how to combine the intended regionalization of the new channel with high programme quality and significant Danish content quotas.

TABLE 1

Broadcast media structure in the Nordic countries.

	Denmark	Norway	Finland	Sweden
Population (m.)	5.1	4.2	5.0	8.6
Households (m.)	2.2	1.5	1.9	3.6
Cable HH (m.)	1.2	0.5	0.7	1.7
DTH HH (000s)	30	60	5	200
Television:				
Public service	DR, TV2[1]	NRK	YLE1+2	SVT1+2
Priv. nat. ch	—	TV2	MTV/TV3[2]	TV4
Priv. sat. ch	TV3/D	TV3/N TVNorge	PTV[3]	TV3/S TV5Nordic
Pay-TV	Kanal2 FilmNet TV1000	FilmNet TV1000	FilmNet HTV	FilmNet TV1000
Local terr. tv stations	8	a few	—[4]	—
Local cable stations	yes	yes	yes	yes
Video, per cent population	50	50	55	60
Radio				
Public service, networks 3	2[5]	4	4	
Private stations	275	300	65	175[6]

Notes:

1. DR and TV2 are both state owned and operated, but with separate agreements with the government.
2. YLE and MTV are separate organizations: YLE is state owned and MTV a private corporation. MTV leases the TV3 network from YLE. YLE is the only licensed TV broadcaster, which thus keeps the ultimate control.
3. PTV is a cable only network, reaching 60 per cent of cable subscribers or 20 per cent of all.
4. Nine local terrestrial television stations were licensed by the government in April 1992.
5. In 1991, Parliament allocated a third national network to NRK and a fourth to a private licensee, yet to be approved.
6. A political decision in Parliament is due in 1992 about commercial local radio. Existing stations are non-profit access stations.

The new TV2 was created to reflect high aspirations on all accounts. The head office is located outside the capital, namely in Odense, Denmark's second largest city. The channel is obliged not only to create and serve eight regions with news and current affairs programmes, but also to deliver regional programmes to the national network. TV2 is wholly owned by the State, but separately governed by its own Board and management. Advertising is sold through a separate State company, TVR, which funnels its net revenues to the Broadcasting Fund, into which licence fee revenues are also put. Despite its income from advertising, TV2 will be dependent on licence fee money for some time to come. From the outset in 1988, one third of its budget came from the

Broadcasting Fund, a share which is gradually to be reduced as sale of advertising increases, thereby making the channel economically independent. The British Channel 4 was held up as the ideal model for TV2: in-house production of news and current affairs complemented by commissioning of domestic programmes from independent producers. TV2, as well as DR-TV, have certain public service obligations. Thus the channel shall broadcast at least 50 per cent Danish or Nordic programmes.

Opinions on the amount of revenue that can be gained from the sale of television advertising have been very divided. The government was, as it turned out, over-optimistic in its calculations, and the present recession has not helped TV2 meet its obligations. The channel has accumulated a snowballing debt burden. Parliament has decided to increase the time allowed for national advertising to 10 per cent of total transmission time from the present 25 minutes per day (20 minutes of national, 5 minutes of regional advertising).

The new channel became popular quite fast, attracting more than half of all viewing, up from a third at the start. Its news programmes were on a par with the established news of DR after a period of two years, its entertainment programmes are even more popular. The price TV2 has had to pay for its success is to be found in its programme costs which are significantly above the level envisioned by Parliament. Political parties do not agree on more liberal advertising conditions (yet) and they refuse to ease the regional obligations. At the same time TV2 is becoming a financial burden on the Broadcasting Fund and on DR, which is totally dependent on licence fee revenue.

Cable television is being extended in Denmark, in a dual system. The regional telephone companies are eager to introduce more local and pay services on their cable systems. Many households are also connected to the old CATV systems. Apart from DR-TV, TV2 and a few local stations, of which Channel 2 in Copenhagen is the most prominent, only Scansat TV3's Danish satellite beam provides programmes for Danish viewers. TV3 Denmark was split off from the all Scandinavian TV3 to facilitate the sale of Danish advertising and to attract more viewers. The effects of this move have so far been marginal.

Local public access radio stations were licensed in Denmark in 1983. From 1988 onwards, advertising was allowed. The rationale for the introduction of independent radio was to make local radio a local matter: there is no national control over the broadcast licensees. Today, there are an estimated 275 stations, two thirds of which rely on advertising finance (up to 6 minutes per hour). The currently largest private commercial station, the Voice, was started by the owner of the Channel 2 television station in Copenhagen. The Voice is nowadays broadcast on eight local stations and by satellite to cable systems around the country.

DR Radio has lost listeners, especially young people. The public broadcaster is trying to regain some of the ground lost by changing the format of its own networks. One national radio network (P3) is from January 1992 onwards primarily designed to attract young listeners.

Norway

Norway is dominated by very strong regional and local affiliations which permeate political life in the country. This is also borne out in the mass media. At the same time, NRK, the national public service broadcaster, has had and still enjoys strong support from all parts of the country. The political explanation for this lies in the determined decentralization of NRK and its resources. NRK Radio is divided into eighteen regions with their own broadcasts and network productions; NRK Television only recently began regional broadcasts, but is deterred by the high costs. The second national radio network, created by an Act of Parliament in 1984, is located in Trondheim, the country's third largest town.

All through the 1970s Norwegians could only dream of a second television channel. Financially it was a remote idea, because of the high costs per viewer, and the idea of supplementing the licence fee with advertising was rejected. Instead, Norway was keen, and more so than the other Nordic countries, to extend the spillover from Denmark and Sweden by satellite (the Nordsat project) to provide Norwegian viewers with more choice in television. In 1985, however, the Labour government in power at the time proposed a second channel within NRK, possibly combined with external sources of income. The political opposition rejected the idea. Once in power, the Conservatives presented their own Bill in 1990. Parliament then agreed to move rather rapidly, and as early as the end of 1990 a decision was made to establish a national TV2 outside NRK.

The licence was awarded in early Autumn 1991. The new channel is obliged to serve the whole country (which is very expensive considering Norway's topography). TV2 is required to broadcast news and current affairs programmes and to endeavour (during the initial period of its licence) to reserve more than 50 per cent of transmission time to programmes with Norwegian content. Finally, the channel headquarters have to be established in Bergen, the country's second largest city. In return, privately owned TV2 is allowed to sell advertising time up to a maximum of 10 per cent of broadcasting time or 30 minutes per day, in blocks between programmes. Foreign capital is limited to 20 per cent of the shares.

The designated operator of TV2 is a group centred around the Schibsted publishing company, the biggest in the country, and Gutenberghus, a large Danish publisher of weeklies. Most Norwegian programmes will be bought from independent production companies, one of which is controlled by Gutenberghus. The owners of the station hope to break even in a few years and be profitable after a period of ten years.

When it goes on the air at the end of 1992, TV2 will be faced with competition from two domestic satellite channels, TV Norge and TV3 Norway, the Norwegian edition of Scansat TV3. These two channels each attract about 15-20 per cent of total viewing time in cabled households.

Local radio outside NRK began in 1981, when local access stations were introduced. From a small beginning with 10 transmitters, independent radio in Norway has grown into a two-tiered system as in Denmark. Of the approximately 300 private stations, 50–60 are commercial and of these perhaps half are economically viable. About 200 stations are run by churches and organizations, the remainder by individuals, schools, local sports federations and community clubs. In 1988, when advertising was allowed (6 min/hour), some of the bigger stations began to offer network news and national advertising by satellite. Today, there are two such syndicates serving the private radio sector in Norway.

Each local station, licensed by a central authority, is obliged to provide local programmes to the tune of 75 per cent of broadcasting time, and at a certain level of commercial revenue it has to hand over 5 per cent to a central fund. Stations with no advertising can apply for financial support out of this fund. In the main cities and several other communities, local stations have become a strong alternative, especially for the young audience. In total, about a third of all radio listening time goes to independent stations.

In 1991, Parliament granted NRK a third radio network licence. The new channel is expected to be developed in order to attract younger listeners to a greater extent than NRK's other two networks, P1 and P2. Simultaneously, a fourth national radio network was approved by Parliament. Like TV2, the private national network will be obliged to serve the whole country and all listeners. The new NRK and private radio networks are expected to be on the air from 1993.

Finland

Finland has a unique system of national television. The first station in the country, MTV, was started as a private initiative in 1953, financed by advertising. When YLE, the national public service broadcaster later began with television, MTV's programmes were incorporated into YLE's national schedule. In return for national coverage, MTV agreed to pay a contractual fee for distribution of its programmes, which has greatly enhanced YLE's budgets over the years. Later, when YLE introduced a second channel, MTV's programmes were inserted in both networks, surrounded by YLE's own programmes.

MTV is a complete television station, with its own national news, current affairs, entertainment and fiction programmes. Although the two organizations compete, the relationship seems to be marked more by symbiosis than rivalry. In 1987, a third network was started in order to allow MTV to sell local advertising time and to give its owners – YLE, MTV and Nokia – an opportunity to introduce terrestrial pay-TV. The latter project never materialized. Instead TV3 evolved into MTV's own channel, on which from 1993 onwards all of MTV's programmes will be shown. However, the third network is owned and operated by YLE. Thus the old symbiosis has been extended, rather than changed.

Like many small countries, Finland realizes the need to concentrate its scarce resources on domestic productions. If Finland does not do this, nobody else will produce fiction and news in Finnish.

A consortium of thirty-seven newspapers tried to challenge the YLE-MTV duopoly in 1986 by putting forward a proposal for an independent broadcasting corporation which would run TV3. It failed to persuade the government or Parliament that it would yield more or better domestic television than YLE-MTV could provide. Cable operators in the three biggest cities launched the PTV cable network in 1990 in an attempt to capture some of the local advertising money flowing to TV3. In mid 1991, 60 per cent of cabled households (20 per cent of all households) had access to PTV, but its share of viewing was small.

Cable television was introduced in Finland as a commercial service at an earlier date than in any other country in Europe. Local telephone companies are involved in the establishment of cable networks. The Helsinki telephone company introduced two local channels on its cable company HTV at the end of the 1970s. A Cable Law, defining conditions for advertising and programme content, was passed by Parliament in 1987. HTV later served as the nucleus for PTV.

In April 1992 the government awarded nine licences for local terrestrial television stations, all of which are located outside the major towns. Their remit clearly defines the stations as cultural and informational resources for local purposes. Up to 15 per cent of programming time may be taken up by advertising.

For various reasons, the public demand for local access radio stations *(närradio)* was never as strong in Finland as in the neighbouring countries. Local newspapers were, on the other hand, very interested in the electronic media. Newspapers, rich in cash in the 1980s, were in 1985 allowed to launch private radio stations on a temporary basis. In 1987, a local radio law made them a permanent part of the Finnish media structure. At the end of 1991, there were 65 private stations, of which 58 were commercial. Of these, the biggest and most successful ones are owned, partly or in total, by newspapers. More than half of the private stations have declared a political affiliation, split evenly between the left and conservative parties.

According to the law, each radio station is seen as an independent local voice. Networking is limited, signal reach is local, and local production is required to fill 75 per cent of transmission time. Advertising (up to 6 minutes per hour) has increased rapidly in private radio, and accounted for more than 4 per cent of the total media advertising expenditure in 1991. The main concern among commercial stations is to liberalize the

regulations (increase reach of signals, reduce local production quotas and lift the ban on networking, which is currently limited to three stations). To date, the government has only permitted stronger transmitters for some stations. Only in the capital is there competition between private stations. In total, the independent local stations attract little more than a third of all radio listening in the country. As a result of competition, the public broadcaster YLE reformed its channel composition in 1990. One national network is now geared to younger listeners in particular, a move which turned out to be a positive one for YLE.

Sweden

Since the start of television in Sweden in the mid 1950s, ideological debates about public or private television have come and gone. Private initiatives were stalled by social democratic governments when the public broadcaster Sveriges Radio (SR) was given the monopoly rights to the new medium, in 1957. The same occurred in 1969, when the second channel was also awarded to SR. Since then, public television is totally paid for by licence fee revenue, as is public radio (since 1925).

In the early 1980s, the rapid increase in video revenues indicated the public's interest in more television; in just a few years video rentals had surpassed cinema attendance and reached the same volume of spending as that on public television. In 1986, Parliament decided that redistribution on cable of foreign satellite television channels was not a matter for domestic media policy. It was seen in the same light as video rentals: a private consumer decision. The Cable Law of 1986 excluded advertising directed exclusively at Swedish viewers and the networking of domestic channels. This, of course, made the setting up of local channels impossible, and put an end to all up-linking from Sweden. It did not, however, stop a Swedish-turned-Scandinavian channel from London, TV3, from becoming attractive to cable companies and viewers. When the Astra satellite became operational in early 1989, the situation changed dramatically. Suddenly, the Cable Law had become spineless, because Astra was viewed as a direct broadcast satellite, and as such allowed to be received by anyone. A commission was appointed to advise on how to the make best use of the adverting money available in Sweden. In April 1990, a new Swedish satellite channel, called TV4, was authorized to broadcast from the Swedish DBS satellite Tele-X. The same year, Nordic TV had started broadcasting to Swedish cable subscribers from a Belgian satellite transponder.

The social democratic government, in power until September 1991, wanted to steer all commercial revenues to SR; on the other hand several opposition parties wanted to establish a private competitor to SR. A minority in Parliament wanted the public and private sector to compete for advertising. Parliament decided in June 1991 that advertising should be exclusively given to a new private channel with a number of public service obligations. The Swedish law permits advertising up to a maximum of 10 per cent of daily broadcasting time, with a maximum of up to 13 per cent in any individual hour. Advertising spots are to be inserted in between programmes.

More than thirty-five companies and groups declared their interest in the licence. After long and complicated negotiations the government and a consortium signed the agreement for the new domestic terrestrial channel in November 1991. The operator of the new TV4 are the owners of the old TV4 and TV3. The two competitors decided to share the risks rather than take the risk of destroying each other. The future relationship between the satellite-delivered TV3 and the terrestrial TV4 is still unclear.

From January, 1992, the Cable Law also allows advertising on cable channels and all restrictions on networking of such channels have been removed.

A new Charter for public broadcasting for the period 1992-1996 was approved by Parliament in June 1992. Although for a shorter period than before (Charters used to last ten years, the previous one lasted only six years), the new agreement between the State and the public broadcasting companies (one for television, one for radio and one

for educational programmes) is economically generous, possibly reflecting the fact that public broadcasting has until now successfully withstood the commercial challengers.

The bourgeois coalition government which came into power in 1979 decided to permit local non-profit groups and organizations to start radio stations of their own. From a modest beginning, the so called neighbourhood stations have grown immensely in Sweden. Today, about 170 transmitters are broadcasting, many 24 hours a day, 2500 groups and organizations are actively involved. The pressure to establish regular private radio stations financed by advertising remained weak for many years. The Swedish Employers Federation (SAF) began lobbying for a change in the law and has for several years paid for their own local stations in the three major cities.

Subsequent to Parliament's decision on private television, it is clearly only a matter of time before private radio is introduced by Parliament. Many groups, including the press, are jockeying for position in the new market which will be open as early as the beginning of 1993. In March 1992 the government circulated a proposal for a new private radio law which – if approved by Parliament – in one swoop would give Sweden the most liberal law in Europe. Licences would be auctioned off to the highest bidders, there would be no programming obligations and very generous networking conditions would make it impossible to enforce any local character on the new stations – despite the fact that the government claims licences will reflect just that.

What role there will be for the old public access stations in the next phase of Swedish radio is unclear. As Parliament prepares to make a decision, the discussion centres around ownership and local control of the new stations.

Summary

What conclusions about the broadcasting situation in the Nordic countries can be drawn from this short presentation? And is there a specific Nordic model of broadcasting liberalization?

First of all, in comparison to many other countries in Europe, the evolution of a dual radio and television system in the Nordic region has been gradual, cautious and clearly guided by cultural motives. One could say that this has been a process under centralized political supervision. Traditional public service is backed by the overwhelming majority in all four Parliaments. Commercial broadcasting is seen as an extension of it. As far as television is concerned, an increase in the number of terrestrial channels (TV2 in Denmark and Norway, TV3 in Finland and TV4 in Sweden) is tailored according to strict national and quality programme aspirations. A majority of programme hours should be filled with domestic productions, quality news and current affairs, and a full range of programmes which as a general rule are supposed to serve the whole country.

In Denmark, the State kept full control of the new TV2. In Finland, the long-established private MTV has agreed to continue to broadcast under licence from the public YLE for most of the 1990s. YLE controls the TV3 network, which is leased to MTV. In Norway, TV2 is to be operated by a private, basically Norwegian company in which the country's biggest and most respected publisher is a prominent owner. In Sweden, the new terrestrial TV4 is also privately owned, and is broadcasting under its own, rather detailed agreement with the State. In Norway and Sweden, the State has kept control of the transmitters.

Secondly, changes in the national public broadcasting systems are primarily due to technological developments and less to ideas of providing increased freedom of choice for consumers and increased opportunities for independent producers. Political decisions about additional terrestrial channels did not come about until satellite and cable distribution systems were well under way and were demanding political recognition.

All four Nordic markets are small, money for financing new services is limited and costs of domestic television productions are high. No big surprise then that Parliaments in all countries have been eager to try to reserve the untapped advertising potential for national productions. Commercially financed broadcasters have been allowed to operate under certain conditions. Traditional public broadcasters are to remain strong. Some adjustments of these aspirations will no doubt have to be made in the coming year, in order to make it possible/easier for the new channels to live up to the obligations they have accepted.

Fourthly, one can conclude that influences from the rest of Europe have been weak or indirect. The Scandinavian countries have all decided to permit less advertising than the EC Directive or the Council of Europe Convention allows. Only Norway and Sweden have enabled foreign investors to own minority shares. Whether or not such restrictions can be maintained in the future will depend on how strong the foreign competition for domestic advertising will be.

In radio, the Scandinavian model of non-profit local access stations has given way to a two-tiered system of local private radios: all the large stations are commercial with the remainder consisting of access or popular movement stations. In Sweden, a political decision to this effect is due in 1992. Local stations are to be kept local through limitations on networking. A major concern is editorial control in a few hands. Only in Norway has a new national private radio network been approved, in addition to the local stations.

In the 1970s, all four Nordic countries shared the same broadcasting model: radio and television under a national public monopoly. The exception was Finland where one private operator had access to certain 'windows' on the national television channels. In the beginning of the 1990s, all four countries will again share the same pattern of broadcasting: a dual market with a strong public broadcasting sector and a centrally regulated private sector.

Whether this situation will remain unchanged during the 1990s will primarily depend on changes brought about by further integration into the European Community, and to a lesser extent on changes in domestic media priorities .

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Independent Local Radio – an Irish success story

Denis O'Brien

An outsider taking a cursory glance at independent broadcasting in Ireland in 1991 could be forgiven for thinking that the performance of the sector as whole was at best disappointing and at worst disastrous. The collapse of the national radio licence holder, Century Radio, and the removal of the independent television franchise from the TV3 consortium were landmarks in the recent history of independent broadcasting and, not unexpectedly, dominated most of the public focus, comment and debate on the fledgling sector in the past year.

However, while there was bound to be a natural pre-occupation by the national media with the two major broadcasting casualties, little or no balance has been evident in their focus on the sector as a whole. The old line that 'good news never sold newspapers' was never more true when one considers the relative success of the local independent radio network.

It is even more surprising to see the newspapers collectively use editorial space to blame the demise of Century and TV3 on RTE ! Nothing could be further from the truth. This track obviously suits the newspaper industry, as a capped RTE certainly makes the advertising market easier for them. I would suggest a parallel debate of self-interest versus national interest should be opened up. The high level column inch coverage of the debate has frightened the politicians into limbo land in changing Mr. Burke's ill-fated legislation.

It is now just over two and a half years ago since the first of the country's new local independent stations began broadcasting. The Radio and Television Act, 1988 had laid the ground for the cleaning up of Ireland's chaotic radio airwaves and provided the opportunity for an alternative to state-sponsored broadcasting with channels that would be demand-driven.

Much has changed of course, since the first stations came on air in the second half of 1989. Market demands forced some stations to change their original blue-prints, revise their financial/cost structures and modify their ambitions. It is important to state at this point, that the primary 'market forces' that have moulded the current shape of independent radio have not been the 'faceless advertisers, station programmers and money-men' that some sections of the media would have us believe. The real arbiters of success for any radio station, or any commercial medium for that matter, are first and foremost the public at large.

Against all odds

Of the 25 local stations proposed at the time, 22 are now broadcasting with varying degrees of listenership across the country. In spite of facing extremely strong competition from RTE, with its two heavily branded stations, its radio broadcasting pedigree of almost seventy years, its huge financial and human resources, its added TV and publishing exposure and its multi-waveband availability, independent local radio has beaten the odds to capture a substantial listenership base.

A series of Joint National Listenership Research (JNLR) surveys have mapped the progress of the local independents since April-May 1990. Since then the all adult

listenership of the medium, on an average weekday, has risen from 34% to 44% in the July-December period of last year, placing it just behind Radio One (46%) but well ahead of 2FM (28%). In roughly the same period the medium's average share of people's time spent listening to radio has increased by seven percentage points to 31%. (To put this in some perspective, it has taken the overall ILR network in the UK some eighteen years to achieve its current 38% share of listening against the BBC.)

A rich and varied mix

The growing audience share of the independent stations is a testament to the Irish public's long-held desire for a legal and local listening alternative. Urban and rural communities the length and breadth of the country have embraced their local radio stations in much the same way as they had previously done with their local newspapers. This has given rise to a rich and varied mix of programme styles around the country, each designed to appeal to the different communities, special interests and age groups that exist.

The carefully planned formats of the music-led stations in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway for example are complemented by the more locally focused elements of the stations in the provinces. Unfortunately, the Dublin-based perception of many of the rurally located independents tends to be a caricature of radio stations broadcasting a mix of 'ear to ear' country and Irish music and death notices. In most cases this is far from the truth. Stations such as Clare FM, Highland Radio in Donegal, Radio Kerry and our own station, Classic Hits 98FM in Dublin have shown that by giving people what they want to hear on a local basis they can provide a real alternative to RTE.

Each and every one of the twenty plus stations now broadcasting have contributed in some way to breaking the mould of radio broadcasting. These range from some extremely successful local radio drama on MWR in Mayo to news and sports scoops on many of the other stations. From Dublin to Dunmore East, the local stations are becoming part of the fabric of city and country life and in the process demonstrating that broadcasting, without state aid or influence, can be both non-elitist and of good quality.

Future prospects

The future prospects for independent broadcasting have come sharply into focus since the Century and TV3 controversies and the widely-accepted failure of the measures in the 1990 Broadcasting Act. Many commentators see the general downturn in advertising expenditure and the flawed pedigree of government policy on broadcasting as major obstacles to the viability of local radio in this country.

Certainly in the area of advertising income, few if any of the station operators have found their radio franchises to be 'licences to print money'. Only two stations are now making a profit while the majority strive to break even.

Having said this however, the few indicators that do exist show that advertising prospects for local radio are quite healthy. In 1988, the year before the new independents came on air, RTE radio accounted for just over 10 per cent of display advertising revenue in the Republic (excluding property, recruitment, classified and advertising booked locally or directly by individuals). Last year with little or no growth in overall advertising expenditure, the radio medium took an estimated 12.5 per cent share of the total with the independents accounting for almost 30 per cent of this figure and RTE the remainder.

The evidence from last year appears to indicate that even in recessionary times, when companies may be forced to trim their advertising budgets, radio revenues are less susceptible to cutbacks than other media. This is largely related to radio's historic

strength as an advertising medium in this country delivering large audiences effectively at low costs. However, another factor in radio's ad revenue growth has been a more vigorous and professional sales drive by independent operators aimed at advertising agencies and their clients. Through packaging and imaginatively selling their audiences to advertisers they have shown that radio income can be secured.

TABLE 1
Display Advertising Revenue Shares by Medium

	1989 %	1991 %	
National Press	34.5	37.7	
Regional Press	3.1	3.3	
Consumer Magazine	7.9	6.2	
RTE Television	35.2	32.3	
RTE Radio	10.2	8.8	12.5
Independent Radio	—	3.7	
Cinema	—	0.5	
Posters	9.1	7.5	
	100.0	100.0	

Source: A.S.I./Des O'Meara & Partners
Note: Figures are exclusive of property and recruitment revenue and advertising booked locally or directly by advertisers.

A strategic review of long-term trends in the European radio industry produced by UK consultancy, Belenos, highlighted a number of factors likely to influence the future revenue share of radio as an advertising medium. The most important of these were:

1. *The supply of commercial audiences*
   Without long-term growth in the audience to the commercial stations the trend rate of growth in radio advertising would be less than television. In Ireland's case, the audience growth to independent radio in the last two years is therefore a positive indicator.

2. *Product differentiation in the radio audience*
   Radio's advertising share is constrained both by its ability to supply the size and variety of audiences demanded by local and national advertisers and in packaging and marketing these audiences in a concentrated manner. In the UK lack of national coverage has hindered the ability of commercial radio in the UK to deliver mass audiences to national advertisers. Because of the greater concentration of the population in this country into fewer centres this has not been a stumbling block for local stations to date.

3. *Rivalry for audiences and advertising revenue*
   In the UK, the BBC competes with independent radio for audiences but not for advertising. Here, RTE competes on both fronts. A predatory pricing policy by RTE in the future, in which it might use its collective resources to undercut the independent sector, would perhaps pose the most serious threat to the long-term viability of the independents.

4. *The availability of substitute media*
   In 1991, many people finally realized that the transfer of funds from the broadcast media to the print sector was never going to be accomplished by a simple piece of government legislation designed to limit RTE's earning potential but which was ignorant of the way in which advertisers use media. In spite of the 'capping' mechanism introduced by the 1990 Broadcasting Act, RTE's television revenue from advertising remained largely unaffected.

However, if the current limits on RTE's commercial minutage remain then more advertisers will be forced to look at other broadcast alternatives to either supplement or replace their RTE campaigns. Similarly, an erosion of viewing levels on RTE by foreign channels is also more likely to direct revenue towards radio than any other medium.

The future growth rate of radio advertising then will be closely linked to the impact of the economy on the demand for the medium and also to structural factors such as centralized selling, which should stimulate the medium's future use by more advertisers.

Government policy

Advertising revenue aside, the other main factor in determining whether independent commercial broadcasting has a long-term future is very much dependent on the ability and willingness of politicians and regulators to keep their involvement to a minimum.

This is not just an Irish issue but one that is prevalent right across Europe currently. Jonathon Miller, Assistant Editor of the Sunday Times, neatly summed it up recently when he wrote:

> In political circles across Europe, and particularly in the European Commission and Parliament, there remains a deep hostility to commercial broadcasting, to the culture of advertising, to the idea of sponsorship and to the freedom of establishment.

When the 20 per cent quota of news and current affairs was first mooted in advance of independent radio's launch many people in the industry viewed this as the legislators not necessarily wanting to provide the Irish public with good radio but rather radio that was good for them.

As it turned out only a few stations have had difficulty reaching the news quota but nonetheless, it has proven to be a sizable expense for many struggling to stay afloat.

Restrictions on the number of broadcasting licences made available has also been one of the major criticisms of government involvement in broadcasting. Certainly the diversity of formats that existed during the days of the pirate stations does not exist anymore and this is to be lamented. The Dublin market is arguably the most competitive and important radio market and it is likely that current economic conditions will force another station casualty, as the market cannot sustain four advertising supported stations.

Sections of the media continue to bemoan the apparent lack of listening choice in cities like Dublin. But even if one discounts the availability of the BBC radio signals and Atlantic 252 the choice is considerable, as the following table shows:

TABLE 2
Target audiences of Irish stations in Dublin

Radio stations	Target
RTE 1: News/talk/music	30+
2FM: Music	15-30 years
FM3: Music	30+
98FM: Music	20-40 years
Rock 104FM: Music	15-30 years

However it is not the responsibility nor does it make economic sense for the existing commercial stations to be 'all things to all people'. That onus lies with the publicly-financed broadcaster or rests with the government to grant licences to satisfy these apparent listening demands. After all it is rather ironic that today a licence for a satellite TV channel in the UK, potentially broadcasting to millions, can be obtained more easily than one for an Irish radio station with a potential audience counted in hundreds or thousands.

It should be up to the listening or viewing public to decide whether there is a market for twenty-five or fifty or a hundred stations, not the politicians and regulators. They should be basically concerned that prospective broadcasters simply observe normal standards and codes of broadcasting. Ultimately the question of whether a radio or a TV station can be made to work or not depends first and foremost not on its news content or programmes, nor on low costs, but on its ability to attract an audience. No audience, no future – it's as simple as that.

On public service broadcasting: against the tide

Helena Sheehan

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The defence of public service broadcasting has become so unfashionable in recent years. Despite an international climate bearing down upon its economic base from without and an erosion of its ethos from within, I seem to be among an ever dwindling number who want to defend it.

My first experience of the European tradition of public service broadcasting came after two decades of listening to radio and watching television exclusively within the American tradition of commercial broadcasting. I therefore have tended to see it in greater relief than those who grew up taking it for granted. For two decades now I have marvelled at the sort of radio and television it made possible and I have been distressed at the strength of the forces moving against it.

The pressures building up against public service broadcasting have been tied to the pressures building up against the public service generally. It has been part of the global push to privitization, bringing the dismantlement of the public sector, with its concomitant eighties mood of glorification of entrepreneural spirit, of individualist acquisitiveness, of cynicism in relation to higher ideals and social movements.

Crucial to the whole scenario have been the new communications technologies, coming with breathless hard sell, promising a new leisure society, a new interactive capacity, a whole new era of democratic participation and consumer sovereignty, promises which remain largely unfulfilled a decade later. Whatever about the exciting technological possibilities, and I am an enthusiastic user of the new communications technologies, the much heralded communications revolution has been assimilated to the political economy of the increasingly internationalized market economy.

In Thatcherite Britain, the Hunt Report in 1982, the White Paper in 1983 and the Peacock Report in 1986 all came down firmly on the side of the de-regulation of broadcasting, breaking with the Reithian tradition in British broadcasting. The push was on for a new level of commercial penetration, with a minimum of restriction on the free play of market forces, assuming that commercial competition was the surest guide to quality. The monetarist case came packaged as widening the viewer's choice, as promoting diversity and initiative, as taking power from stuffy government bureaucrats and transferring it to the consumer.

Underneath all the freedom of choice rhetoric, however, is the reality that freedom for the pike is death to the minnow. It is freedom of choice for those holding the balance of power, for those at the commanding heights of struggle for control of the world's telecommunications systems. Paradoxically, real freedom of choice requires public regulation, albeit a new more flexible and more open form of public regulation, as opposed to the old elitist Reithian model.

The apparent equality of the marketplace masks the deepest inequalities. The patterns of dominance in the electronic representation of the world are tied to the patterns of dominance in everything else. Not everyone has the same opportunity to tell their own story any more than everyone has the same opportunity to buy and sell on the open market. The fear is that all indigenous cultural expression, indeed all higher forms of intellectual, moral and aesthetic consciousness, would be swamped by the culture of *Dallas*, Eurodisney and Coca Cola.

At the same time as there has been a trend toward increasing concentration of ownership and control of the commanding heights of world communications, there has simultaneously been a countervailing trend toward fragmentation of production, transmission and reception on other levels, with both of these trends making inroads against the middle level of nationally based institutions heretofore in control of communications. National broadcasting institutions, such as BBC and RTE, have been caught in the middle between forces of increasing centralization at one level and forces of increasing decentralization on the other.

Ireland in its own way has been caught up in the struggle between the forces supporting public service broadcasting and those advocating the supremacy of the free market, even if the debate has often been confused and the struggle for power has taken on farcical forms. Through most of the eighties, pirate radio stations operated illegally. When the government closed them down in the mid 1980s, they immediately resumed broadcasting and the government did nothing. Public reaction was fairly successfully manipulated by the pirates and the whole debate was posed as being between public and private broadcasting, with public broadcasting being characterized as synonymous with censorship, bureaucracy, centralization and stodgy programming, as if commercial broadcasting automatically brought freedom of expression, community participation, decentralization and vibrant programming. By the end of the decade, the situation in radio was regularized, with mixed results, some small successes and some gigantic failures.

Successive governments have made a mess of the whole thing, especially in television. They have persistently enacted measures to undermine RTE to provide 'a level playing pitch', from repeated refusals of requests to raise the licence fee and to provide an effective method of collection to the existing (and rumoured soon to be rescinded) cap on advertising. At the same time, there has been a dramatic collapse of alternatives with the demise of TV3 and Century. No one is happy with the present situation. Perhaps the smaller independent producers, caught in the middle between more powerful public institutions and commercial interests, have suffered most.

My own view of what needs to be done is to enact new legislation eliminating the obstructions to RTE and radically opening up the whole scene to independent producers. While I believe that RTE has served Irish society well, I do believe that its monopoly of television broadcasting must be ended. To have only one structure for commissioning television projects is no longer satisfactory. Too many good projects have been rejected with nowhere else to go. There needs to be an alternative to RTE in-house production and even to RTE commissioning of independent production. I believe that Network 2 should be given over to an alternative public authority and run as Channel 4 in the sense of commissioning production to independent producers, rather than as an alternative in-house service, whether as it is now or as a commercial alternative.

Although public service broadcasting needs to be transformed, I believe that it must be preserved. It would be a tragedy to behold the end of this form of broadcasting, which treats its audience primarily as citizens with needs and interests and not as consumers of advertisers' products. It is time to move on, but carrying with us the best of what we have evolved so far.

Interview with Keith Donald, Popular Music Officer of the Arts Council

This interview was conducted on 17 September 1991.

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Edited, and with an introduction and postscript by Barbara Bradby

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Introduction

Walking down O'Connell Street, past the huge mural that proclaims Dublin as 'rock music capital of the world', and watching the Joshua Trio reduce a crowd to stitches of laughter with their blasphemous piss-take of the Holy Family of Irish rock, one could be forgiven for wondering why popular music has been so much the poor relation in Communications Studies. Two weeks before, it was Sinéad O'Connor and Mary Coughlan who were the headline speakers addressing the crowds outside the GPO, after a fourteen-year-old girl had been prevented from travelling to England for an abortion. But to judge by the media reaction, Sinéad O'Connor's right to speak had rather less public acceptance than the right to travel that week. She's 'only a singer' came the chorus of reaction: why would the Taoiseach meet her before elected women representatives? And when fourteen-year-old girls followed her advice and walked out of school, a whole Gay Byrne show was devoted to condemning the girls themselves, their parents, and of course Sinéad O'Connor, for such dangerously anarchic behaviour. Once again, popular music became the symbolic core of a generation gap that took over for a moment from the 'main issue' that was being deliberated on by the male elders of a society on behalf of its adolescent girls. 'Who elected Sinéad O'Connor ?' said an annoyed student of Women's Studies to me in class. I didn't have much difficulty in replying. The informal 'election' of rock 'stars' has been part of the politics of rock at least since the 1950s, and let's not forget that the core of that electorate is formally disenfranchised. The fourteen-year-olds of Ireland do not have the vote, but they do buy records.

Popular music has emerged in the post-war period as a major field of communication in the broadest sense of the creation of meaning both in the production and consumption of musical products. It has been the site of the creation of sub-cultural identities, of changing national identities, and of new shared systems of meaning that link nations and sub-cultures in a network that subverts the old relations of dominance and subordination. Spaces have been created for new national 'rock musics', which do not, however, remain purely national. Their markets, like the capital that owns them, are increasingly 'global' in character, as England and America lose their dominance, and become simply 'local' musics within the emerging global network of 'localities' (Frith 1991). Within this scenario, the emergence of Ireland as a global music producer has little to do with the breakdown of cultural isolationism under the weight of Anglo-American rock imperialism, and probably more to do with Ireland's 'comparative advantage' as an English-speaking country, now that English has lost its signification as imperial language (Frith 1991), and through rock, acquired meaning as the language of global youth.

However, the optimism of the enthusiasts of 'world music' not withstanding, one can see strong vestiges of the cultural imperialism/cultural nationalism dialectic in looking at the pattern of outside support for the popular music industry by country by country. The Norwegian government supports its music industry, but Sweden does not. The Canadian government has well organized support for both anglophone and francophone

music; the US does not. Denmark actually earmarks a permanent (small) percentage of government expenditure for the music industry. France has its much publicized 'Minister for Rock'. And Ireland has its Popular Music Officer attached to the Arts Council, an appointment which was way ahead of thinking in Britain. The British thinking on the topic is summed up by an 'April Fools' item broadcast on BBC Radio 1 on April 1st last year, in which Simon Bates was to become British 'Minister for Rock' and Phil Collins was asked to comment: what was set up as the joke was the idea that British music should need government support like the French, an attitude that is likely to prove as short-sighted as it is chauvinist. Clearly much research needs to be done on the different patterns of support for the music industry in these different situations, but one already gets a sense of a sort of 'core' and 'periphery' in musical/cultural terms, with countries that perceive themselves as 'peripheral' adopting the ideology that their national music industry needs support. How the tensions between support for the export of 'global music' and support for the nurturing of the 'local' music market are worked out in these different situations will be fascinating to observe.

The following interview with Keith Donald, conducted by Rose Downes last September, is offered in the spirit of opening up these issues as an important area for study in Ireland. The background to the interview is the approach of the music industry to the government in 1987 to establish the need for an appointment in the area of popular music. A post of Popular Music Officer to the Arts Council was subsequently advertised and resulted in the appointment of Keith Donald, a practising musician and one-time member of the band, Moving Hearts. As an Arts Council officer, the appointment is the last in a series of music officers: for Traditional Irish music, Classical, Opera and Jazz. Popular music is in practice, then, defined as anything that is not one of the foregoing. How the job description of Popular Music Officer was planned, and the principle areas of focus decided on — advice and information, advocacy, and education — are described in the interview below. Since the interview, the frustration described by Keith Donald at having no budget and his aspiration to get the job of Popular Music Officer onto a more permanent and secure basis, have achieved some resolution in the establishment of Music Base in Dublin. We have therefore included a postscript in which the reader is brought up to date on this development.

Interview

Would you like to introduce yourself on the tape ?

My name is Keith Donald. Today is Friday the 17th of September, 1991. I'm the Popular Music Officer in the Arts Council and I've been here since February the first 1988. Three and a half years.

Can you give me some background on your position here ?

Yes. a number of people in the music industry got together during early 1987. And they decided that the music industry had no real one representative that people could identify; so they talked to the Arts Council about putting this position in place and it was decided to do it for two years as an experiment. The position was advertised in the media in the middle of 1987.

When you say the media, do you mean all the papers or just Hot Press ?

No, all the papers, national papers.

Throughout the country?

Yes. A lot of people applied for the job. After a process of interviews, and written submissions, I started work on the first of February 1990. So, you could say that the industry was the prime mover in getting the job started.

Okay, it wasn't necessarily the government.

It wasn't the government at all. It wasn't the musicians either. It was the industry.

Do you have any idea, though, why this is ?

I don't know. Musicians in this country are not noted for their organizational abilities.

Why was it not government?

Well, perhaps it was set up partly to prove to government that it was a serious viable industry.

So you don't think, then, the Government would have, maybe five years down the line, thought about instituting something itself, given that there was already the Arts Council ?

Could well have done, but you have to also think that part of this equation is the Arts Council which is the cultural advisor to the government of the day. So, the Arts Council is in a way representing government; it's funded by the Taoiseach's Office. For the Arts Council to put the position into place, was quite a leap; certainly without any precedent in these isles. None of the other Arts Councils from these islands have a Popular Music Officer.

How would you describe your job ?

Well, following straight on from the last question, I had no precedent for what I would do when I started work here. What I did have, was an in-house committee in the Arts Council, and a joint committee of the Popular Music Industry Association (1) and the Arts Council, to guide me. I put a range of things to them, we talked it out amongst ourselves. And I ended up with three main functions: one I suppose you could call 'advice and information'. And that would be to anybody, whether they're already in or want to be in the music business, and it could vary from an unemployed 18 year old, would-be guitar hero, to a government department. Anybody could come along and ask for advice and information. If I don't have it, I'll try to have it for them. The second strand of the work, I suppose would be called 'advocacy'. It's trying to get decision makers to take the music business seriously and I don't have to try that hard nowadays, but I did have to try harder three and a half years ago. I lobbied Coras Tráchtála (CTT: now An Bord Tráchtála – eds.), the Irish Export Board, to get interested in the music business. They had had a presence at the MIDEM (2) going on in France each January, but they hadn't really done much else and they hadn't been to MIDEM at that stage since 1982. I've now got them interested and they've taken stands at the New Music Seminar (3) the last couple of years .

Was there a presence at the New Music Seminar before that ?

No. There would have been half a dozen people going as individuals, but there was no serious presence. Paul McGuinness was once the key-note speaker. as well, in 1988.

At the New Music Seminar?

Yes, but apart from that, there had been no Irish presence.

Do you think that his being the keynote speaker and then CTT starting stands that next year, do you think that those are related ?

No, I don't think they're related at all. I think what got CTT into it was two things: constant lobbying from here, and the fact that Una Johnston, who had been Director of the New Music Seminar, Managing Director of the New Music Seminar, relocated to Ireland. And I got her to come... we went out to meet CTT soon after she came back here. They've taken it very seriously, but they're only one of the decision makers I've been trying to influence. I've also been trying to get a Home Recording Royalty, which usually is referred to as Blank Tape Levy, instituted, so there's been quite an amount of correspondence on that from here.

How's that coming along?

Well...

Do you feel it will be successful ?

I think it will be instituted eventually.

1. The Popular Music Industry Association is a committee representing various interests in the music industry in Ireland. It has worked and lobbied on a series of ad hoc issues, including the establishment of a Popular Music Officer, the Home Recording Royalty, and more recently on copyright legislation.

2. MIDEM is an annual trade fair for the world music industry held in Cannes in the south of France in January. It has been going for twenty-six years, and represents producers of all kinds of music. A report on this year's MIDEM, attended by fifty-four countries, gave prominence to the French and Spanish governments' elaborate promotion of new trends in their national musics *(The Independent, 23 January 1992).*

3. The New Music Seminar has been held annually in New York since 1979. It was started up by 'independent' labels in the US as a way of solving their own distribution problems there, in explicit opposition to the dominant 'majors'. Nowadays there is a presence of the large transnational record companies, but it is still dominated by the needs of the independents and smaller labels. As well as being something of a trade fair for the music industry, it also includes talks and discussions led by music industry experts, music journalists, and academics, on a wide variety of aspects of the music business.

Is it getting blocked by any of the companies ?

No, the only people who would block it would be – the lobby in England was tape manufacturers, we don't have any tape manufacturers in this country – so the only people who could possibly object to it would be tape importers. And there's no reason why they should because it's not going to do their business any harm, and in fact, the figures from other countries have shown that once there is a Home Recording Royalty in place, the amount of home taping actually increases. So, the amount of blank tapes would increase so they should be well happy.

That would be on top of VAT then ?

Yes, it would be. It's not a tax. It's a royalty. It would be separate from VAT which is a tax. It would be a royalty to recompense the originators of the original material.

And so then some sort of Department would be created to deal with collecting the royalties ?

No, I don't think so. I think there are mechanisms already in place for collection and distribution of those royalties. I don't think it would be difficult. A third strand to the work would be education. I've been instrumental in the setting up, staffing, and the curriculum of two courses which combined have seventy-two pupils on a year-round basis in Ballyfermot Senior College (4). And I brought the idea of a seminar to the attention of the Popular Music Industry Association. We discussed it and Hot Press volunteered to run it. It's just had its third outing.

4. 'Rock Performance' and 'Rock Management'

Was that a hard thing to do, I mean to get the idea accepted for a seminar ?

Well, it was, I'd been to the Seminar in a voluntary capacity in 1983 and 84, I think...

You mean at the NMS ? (The New Music Seminar in New York -ed.)

Yes, and in 1989 I went representing the Arts Council and the Popular Music Industry Association. I wrote a report on it when I came back, presented that report to the Popular Music Industry Association. We debated it and discussed it at length, and they decided that it seemed to be a good idea and Hot Press said they would run it. I also have worked with quite a number of other organizations, to have one-off, one day seminars or weekend long seminars.

Around the country ?

Around the country, yes.

Like the ones sponsored by the music shops, where they've had education on keyboards, or...?

No, I haven't been involved in any of those. I'll give you a couple of examples. The Arts Officer in County Clare ran a weekend-long seminar which started Friday at tea time and finished Sunday at tea time. We had talks and video presentations on various aspects of the music business. We also had workshops, master classes, in drums, bass guitar, guitar, keyboards, song writing, and, I'm trying to think, there was a lot. That was County Clare. We had a similar one, but it was one day , on the music business in Limerick. There's one planned for November in County Offaly.

Now how are these areas chosen ?

I don't choose them. I respond to people who come to me and say they want to put on a seminar. And, I mean the first thing that it comes down to is funding. If I had funds to do this, I'd be out there doing it. I wait for people who have some funds to ask me to do it and I respond. So, those are the three main areas of work. I suppose there are other less tangible areas, like going to gigs, keeping your ear to the ground and seeing what's happening, introducing people to people and things like that. But there's also work within the Arts Council. I have to attend staff meetings, policy meetings, and I have to respond to things. For instance, I've just written a letter to an organization in Denmark which wants to know about musicians in this country as regards contracts and tax and all that kind of stuff. So, there is an amount of bureaucratic work attached to the position.

It sounds like a general liaison position where you're pushing things along and pulling things along , and trying to get everything cemented together. Do you think there's more cohesiveness now, like you were saying, introducing people to people and things like that ? Do you think there's more of a sense of community ?

Perhaps, and especially since there were ninety Irish at the New Music Seminar this year. And that's from zero two years ago.

Were they all businesses or people involved in businesses?

We had fifteen Irish companies, six bands, and quite a lot of delegates, and we had six panellist speakers as well. We also had a CD with eighteen Irish bands on it, which was given away free to music industry professionals, in return for their business cards.

Now was this the first year for this ?

Yes. And those ninety people, because they're away from this country will have time to talk to each other and meet each other in a qualitatively, completely different way than if they encountered each other in Ireland. I wrote a letter to all ninety of them and I'm beginning to get a response. A lot of them have said that one thing that happened to them when they were in the States is they did business with other Irish people which they mightn't have done if they were here. So, yes, I've always got the feeling that if there were more than one of me, and if there was a budget, that this job would be much more effective.

You think so then ?

Oh yes, absolutely.

Is there any chance of getting an assistant or a budget ?

Not in the short term, no.

When you say short term, you're thinking about a year, two years, five years ?

I can't see anything in the next year.

Can you describe the process between the Arts Council and the government ?

Yes, I'm not sure it's absolutely related to your purposes in popular music. The Arts Council is the cultural advisor to the government of the day. The Arts Council is a seventeen-member board, which is appointed by the Taoiseach, and holds its tenure for five years. Then whoever's Taoiseach at that time, appoints the next board, and may reappoint several members from the previous board.

I'm thinking more along the lines of, if there's something that you want to help somebody with, or if there's something that you want to try to get the government to help with, how does that process go ? Do you have to petition them to get an interview with somebody and then write a report ?

It's very rare that anyone in my clan would want to talk to somebody in government . I don't think that it's ever happened. The only people that want some relationship with government are industry bodies, like the Popular Music Industry Association. The Arts Council, in that case, would encourage the Popular Music Industry Association to correspond with government. For instance, there's draft legislation going to government at the moment on a Home Recording Royalty. The Arts Council can have nothing to do with that because we have to be, and be seen to be, independent. And we would then be in a position to respond to it when government consults us.

When you say popular music, are there any particular genres that you cover ?

No.

I mean you could have Traditional music doing very well and that could be considered popular. Even though there is a separate branch for Traditional within the Arts Council.

I know what you mean. Well, popular in this case, is taken not to mean popular in terms of numbers, because Pavarotti is popular, and that's the meaning of the word. No, it's like a different use of the word, which is, really, any music that is not Traditional Irish music or Opera or what's generally called, I suppose, 'Classical music'.

So, it would include Jazz then ?

Jazz and Traditional Irish music, and Classical music, each have a different officer in this building. Opera has a different officer again.

It's anything then, that's not covered in the other branches ? It would be Rock, Pop, Country – would Country be considered in it ?

It would, yes. Funnily enough, very few people in the Country area have approached me for help. I'm surprised that it's considered under there. When you're thinking of popular music, you think more along the Rock or the Pop sort of thing.

Okay. What sort of programmes have been implemented so far by your office ?

Well, I don't have a budget to make programmes happen. All I can do is get people with money out there to actually do things. So, with Coras Tráchtála, we talked about the New Music Seminar and they're going to get involved with MIDEM again. That'll be one thing then.

It sounds like it's not so much that you're creating programmes but more getting in with other programmes that exist, working with them and throwing your weight behind them as much as you can?

That's right, because I don't have a budget. If I did have a budget, I could do things like have some way of encouraging songwriters, some way of enabling them. I could run seminars regionally, I could help small record labels with good projects. I could get in at the art end of the rock business, where the music is creative for art reasons, rather than for commercial reasons.

Like perhaps the Project Arts Centre or something along those lines?

Stuff like that, yes. I mean if I did have a budget, yes, there would be programmes I could do. But, while I don't have one, all I can do is piggyback. And I've worked with quite a number of different organizations, for instance, Music Network (5), 7 Up as sponsors, Mars as sponsors, local authorities, regional Arts Officers, the EC, Coras Tráchtála I mentioned... And in other ways as well. For instance, I had a discussion between Jackie Hayden of *Hot Press*, Una Johnston and myself. We said it's impossible for young Irish bands to get stocked in the record shops and it's impossible for them to get any radio play. So, we talked to Capital Radio, which is now Rock 104, and we talked to HMV. And there's now a scheme whereby Hot Press advertises, and Rock 104 plays, and HMV stocks young Irish bands' records.

Is that going to be an indefinite thing?

It depends totally on the public; if the public buy the discs, then it proves the thing is working. If they don't, it will fail like everything else. But it's been in existence for about six months now...

Is there any plan to get this office financed ?

The plan is to move this office into the outside world, if you like. I'm trying to get premises and funding for a new organization which will be called Music Base. It'll be located in Temple Bar and it will be an advice and information centre initially. But it would eventually diversify into other areas, depending on funding again.

Such as? What sort of areas do you have plans for ?

Well, it depends totally on funding, but I'm working on those things, on its permanent funding.

What kind of things would it get into?

It would get into the kinds of things I've been talking about, that I would like to do, if I had a budget in this office. I would think that if there was money, in an organization like Music Base, it could be helping young bands and young song writers produce really good quality demos, thereby also helping Irish studios. I could also be doing things like stopping the vicious circle whereby Irish publishers don't have the money to give significant advances to people, therefore they don't get the people to provide them with the money to provide significant advances to people. That's, I don't know what you want to call it, a vicious circle, a Catch 22 or something, but it will continue to be so unless somebody interrupts the process. Similarly, I would like to, in conjunction with Coras

5. Music Network is an organization funded by the Arts Council to promote music in the regions. Generally it takes groups of classical, traditional, and sometimes, popular musicians, around the regional Arts Centres.

Tráchtála, find some method of providing the seed money for young bands' first tours abroad, which are always loss makers, but you have to do it. I don't want to take over from current ways of financing that, which might be a combination of record companies, a bit of publishing money sometimes, a bit of merchandising money sometimes or just financing it from gigging around this country.

What about seed money for first tours here in Ireland ?

Yes, that could be done too. I would rather do it through existing organizations like Music Network. All these things would be talked out. I wouldn't be the decision maker. I would be the administrator, and I would have a board, an independent board. And I would have A & R committees to decide who got the award and who didn't, and who went into studios, and who went abroad and all that. But that is the way I would envisage it working.

If this Temple Bar project actually succeeds, does come out and is viable, it's based in Dublin. How is this going to affect or help other bands in other areas in the country ? It seems that being in Dublin would be an advantage for somebody needing help with things, or to come see you?

That's just the process of centralization that I can't interrupt. And I also can't be everywhere. In these days of faxes and modems and computers, you can be based anywhere really, but it makes sense to be based where the most bands are, really, for this exercise; so that Dublin does make sense. But people seeking information from me will be able to access me just as well as anybody from Dublin.

Is there any role that the Arts Council, or that you would have, either now or perhaps in the future, in bringing small foreign bands here, for instance, other bands that are being promoted by French Arts Councils, Danish Arts Councils, or whatever?

Well, it's funny you should mention it. There's a scheme called Kaleidoscope, an EC scheme, and I'm working with the Danish Rock Council and there's S.P.N.(6) in Holland. There has to be three countries to qualify for the EC scheme. I'm working with them to try and access some funds from Europe, for exactly what you're talking about. And it will also require sponsorship at this end because we don't have any money for such projects and the EC only pay 25 per cent of the costs. And the Danish Rock Council will be able to pay their own costs, of their bands, so will S.P.N. in Holland. We won't, unless we get sponsorship. So yes, there are plans afoot, but it will depend absolutely, on my success or not at getting sponsorship.

With the Single European Act coming in then, would there be more scope for people who want projects done to apply directly to the EC, instead of to Ireland itself ?

I don't think that would work.

It sounds like there's some monies being set aside, or some ideas from the EC for cultural exchange of music.

Well, there's money set aside for cultural exchange. What we have to do is find out if we can apply it to popular music. As regards an individual applying to the EC, they'd be referred back to the home country's Arts Council, because the EC doesn't work that way. And an individual would have a very slim chance of contacting and motivating the crew load of Arts Councils abroad.

Are you involved in any programmes for popular music in actual schools, apart from Ballyfermot ? Are there any programmes that exist ?

Not at the moment. In the initial days when I started work here, I made some approaches to the Department of Education. I was told that they were quite happy with the teaching of music in schools. And it was very much up to the individual teacher to decide if they wanted to vary from the curriculum. I have been involved in a reactive way with some schools. Some schools have contacted me and said they wanted a talk, or talks given. And I've done that where I've been asked, but it's impossible to go to all schools except through the Department of Education.

6. S.P.N. stands for Stichting Popmuziek Nederland, and is translated as The Dutch Rock Music Foundation. It started in 1975, in a move to promote local 'rock' against the tide of internationally marketed 'pop' (Elderen 1989).

Nowadays, it describes itself as 'a private organization, mainly funded by the Dutch Ministry of Culture, which enables S.P.N. to promote the Dutch rock music scene and help it grow, both at home and abroad'.

It publishes [in English] a promotional magazine called *Holland Rocks Update* three times a year, from which the above quote is taken.It also acts as the Dutch and Belgian representative of the New Music Seminar.

Do you see the state, through this branch of popular music, taking on a significant role in the music scene in the future ? Or do you think that this is what's been done and this will be it ? Do you see the state actually coming in and trying to promote or support the industry more, or do you think it hinders it ?

There's quite an amount of State support as it is, through our tax structure. Section Two of the 1969 Finance Act allows for exemption on royalties, where it's granted. Secondly, any recorded material that's leaving these shores is regarded as a manufactured good. If you set up a company to avail of that, it can be a 10 per cent company (7), rather than paying corporation tax, etc. That's all legitimate and has attracted quite a number of people to live here and it's also attracted a lot of people to work here in the studios.

It would seem that you would have to get to a certain level of performance or skill before you can avail of those opportunities.

I wouldn't agree. There are a lot of people who've got Section Two exemption who, you know, aren't making a fortune. I mean there are people who are making a fortune who avail of that. But there are an awful lot of people who are not rich, who avail of it. It's a very far sighted type of scheme. I don't know of any other country in the world, in fact.

I don't know of any either.

So, the State does help in a way here. Also, in the future, Aosdána (8) – which is administered by the Arts Council, and its membership is currently of people who are elected to it, and they do literature, visual arts, well, whatever – it may well take in practitioners of Popular Music in the future.

Perhaps sleeve designers ?

Yes, it may do in the future, but you never know. I'm not thinking of five years or ten years, I'm thinking of twenty years' time. As regards any state involvement, CTT is a semi-state body, which is already involved. The IDA, (Industrial Development Authority – eds.) which is another semi-state body, has helped funding of several Irish recording studios.

What about other businesses or other areas, like say if somebody were trying to do promotion or something else ?

Something more intangible. I don't think they would have helped in the past. I don't know whether the mechanisms would allow for helping something as intangible as that.

What about a label?

I don't know of any that have ever been helped. They may have been helped by the IDA, I'm not sure. And then there's the Arts Council. So, the government does already help, between the tax things and the semi-state bodies. Quite an involvement in the music business.

How's the response by the industry, or in the field itself ? Is there a sense of too much state involvement perhaps, or not enough in one area ?

Well I can't speak for all the people in the music industry... I know that a lot of people would like to see a Home Recording Royalty instituted. People would also like to see some kind of stronger copyright laws in general. And I would like to see stronger penalties for bootleggers. Those are all aspirational things some of which will probably happen. As regards state involvement, unless it translated down to things like provision of rehearsal studios, or provision of definite funds earmarked for bands to tour abroad

Is that possible?

I don't think so. It will never be certainly in an era of cuts for the health service and for hospitals, you'll never see that instituted.

That's true. Lastly, when you leave this position, what do you hope to have accomplished ?

The position as permanent would be the main thing.

So is it still a pilot scheme ?

Well, either this position or Music Base as a permanent feature of the music scene. I have no contract here. I could be told to clear my desk at any time. I have no feeling of

7. The former Export Profit Tax Relief was in fact replaced in 1981 by an across-the-board 10 per cent corporation tax.

8. Aosdána is an affiliation of creative artists drawn from the worlds of literature, (classical) music and the visual artists. The Arts Council makes available bursaries to individual members of Aosdána.

certainty that I will get Music Base established. It depends on decision makers other than me. I can see that it's a very valid thing to be striving towards. It would positively affect young musicians, bands, it would affect employment statistics, it would affect Ireland's tourism, it would affect Temple Bar. It would be a resource to the music business in general, as regards information. And it would also be a resource for the music business in general, as regards improvement of its infrastructure.

Can you give me an example of how one would go about using Music Base if it were operating ? What would be an ideal use for it ?

Supposing the Fireflies from Cavan, through their manager, get an offer of three dates in Northern Germany. They've totalled up the figures from those three dates and they realize that they're going to lose money if they just go for three dates. I would hope that Music Base has information to guide them towards other suitable clubs, places to perform, on the way there, and while they're touring. But, it would also be able to help them with the best way of transport, the mode, the cheapest and most pleasant perhaps, ways of getting themselves and their gear there and it would help them with regard to lights, PA systems, reasonable prices along the way and in Northern Germany, so that the thing would eventually make sense for them. Left to their own devices, maybe they'd find that all out. But isn't it better if there's a centralized source of information that a lot of bands could use ? And thereby improve all the things that I spoke of before. Also, it could broaden their employment and the money coming back to this country.

How has the response been from people in other countries when you've suggested this ? I'm assuming you have suggested this.

Well, I have and there'd be a welcome for Music Base from an organization that's being established in Europe, which would be a network, an umbrella grouping of all the similar organizations from different countries. They'd love to see it go international.

Postscript

At the time of writing, Keith Donald is moving out of his office in Merrion Square, and setting up the new Music Base offices in the Temple Bar area of Dublin. Music Base exists informally and its Board will be arranging soon for its legal incorporation as a company. This Board is chaired by Arts Council member, Dermot Bolger, with two other Arts Council representatives on it, and while Keith's position will now be Administrator of Music Base, he will still be attached to the Arts Council as Popular Music Officer as an ex officio aspect of his new job.

Music Base has been financed to the tune of £60,000 by the Arts Council, with £20,000 coming from the Ireland Funds (9). The property it will be occupying has been leased from Temple Bar Properties. Keith sees the new development as very much modelled on the Canadian organization FACTOR (Foundation to Assist Canadian Talent on Record), which has been jointly financed by the Canadian government and the music industry. FACTOR has provided support for more or less all Canadian artists who have achieved any degree of success, and their budget has mushroomed in a spectacular way from a small beginning nine years ago.

Music Base is clearly an important new development that opens up many possibilities whether in the area of support to the industry, popular music education, or international networking. We wish Keith Donald all the best in this project, and look forward to hearing about, and hopefully writing about future developments.

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9. The Ireland Funds were established to raise money internationally for the promotion of peace, culture and charity in Ireland. The five Funds presently constituted are the American Ireland Fund, the Australian Ireland Fund, the Ireland Fund of Canada, the Ireland Fund of France and the Ireland Fund of Great Britain.

The Funds are non-denominational and non-political, serving all of Ireland, North and South. The Funds are highly dependent on voluntary input both in the raising of finance and the assessment/evaluation of projects which have applied to the Funds.

Projects which fall under the broad categories of Peace, Culture and Charity are considered for support.

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Television and Schools

Diana Moses and Paul Croll. 1991. *School Television in Use*, London: John Libbey and Co. Ltd.,
ISBN: 0 86196 308 3, 89pp., stg£12.50.

Robin Moss, Christopher Jones and Barrie Gunter. 1991. *Television in Schools*, London: John Libbey and Co. Ltd.,
ISBN: 0 86196 314 8, 62pp., stg£14.50.

Sheelagh Drudy

These two monographs are part of a series of media studies published by John Libbey. The two volumes cover very similar ground insofar as they are based upon sample surveys of English school teachers. They examine the role of educational broadcasting in schools and the current uses by teachers of broadcast material, as well as their attitudes towards and perceptions of television as a medium in the classroom. The primary difference between the two volumes, apart from matters of detail, is one of emphasis. The research by Moses and Croll, originally commissioned from the Broadcasting Research Unit by the BBC and the ITVA considers the implications of the new National Curriculum for schools broadcasting. The monograph by Moss, Jones and Gunter arose as a response by the Independent Television Commission to new responsibilities under Section 34 of the 1990 Broadcasting Act to ensure the provision of schools programmes on Channels 3, 4 and 5. It is, accordingly, more oriented towards the future market for schools television. The two studies point to very positive attitudes to the use of television in schools among teachers and to already existing very high levels of usage.

In an Irish context, it may seem a somewhat academic exercise to give consideration to the issue of the use of television in schools since the untimely demise of Irish broadcasting for schools at the beginning of the 1980s. There is also the difficulty that we do not have up-to-date information on the availability in schools of TV sets, video-recorders and other equipment allied to support services for broadcasting. While it is not surprising that in the post-schools broadcasting era RTE (or the Department of Education) does not collate such information, the result is that we do not have a comparable data-base to the British system. There, the BBC conducts an annual census of equipment in its survey on listening and viewing (SLV). The SLV survey indicates a fairly generous supply of equipment in British schools. Primary schools have an average of 1.7 TV receivers, 1 video-recorder and 4 computers per school. Second level schools have an average of 7.7 TV receivers, 7.5 video-recorders and 36 computers per school. Obviously the numbers in some schools are greater. The survey records that, for example, some 3 per cent of primary schools had over 15 video-recorders and 13 per cent of secondary schools had over 15 TV receivers.

While it would be difficult to be definitive, as the last census of equipment, included in the report of the Educational Broadcasting Committee (1982), is now very out of date, my own experience of visits to schools in the Leinster area would suggest that few Irish schools could match these resources. Most schools do indeed have at least one TV receiver and video-recorder, as well as a number of computers and one or more overhead projectors. However, the practicalities of availing of these resources for lessons often mean that they are under-utilised. There would not be the same level of usage as in Britain where 58 per cent of teachers make use of television in their lessons at least one or twice a week (Moss, Jones and Gunter: 55). The sort of factors which inhibit usage in Irish schools (and indeed in British schools though to a much lesser extent – Moses and Croll: 47) are scarcity of equipment and the consequent difficulties of access to it, technical back-up problems, especially in the not too uncommon event of equipment

breakdown, and, by no means least, the sheer difficulty of transporting heavy equipment from one location to another – perhaps up and down steps – in the middle of a very busy teaching day. Irish teachers might be intrigued, and rather envious, to know that English second-level schools have audio-visual resources staff employed in the schools (Moses and Croll: 44–45) and that while few schools have 'ideal' conditions (a TV monitor in every classroom), some two-thirds of teachers interviewed felt they had adequate facilities for viewing programmes (Moses and Croll: 34).

This is not the place to discuss in detail the question of television as a teaching or learning medium. As is the case with the study of most aspects of the effects of television, results are somewhat mixed. However, it appears that the way in which television is approached and used is the critical factor (Salomon, 1979). Although there is little Irish research on this matter, a recent study of the use of television in the implementation of aspects of the junior cycle geography syllabus would tend to confirm this. Placing children in front of a television set is no substitute for good teaching. However, where good quality programming, relevant to the syllabus, is integrated into classroom teaching with good preparation and follow-up, then the outcome — in the form of gains in knowledge, attitudes and skills — is more enduring than either traditional 'chalk and talk' or 'television only' methods. The latter, perhaps unsurprisingly, is the least effective of all (Houlihan, 1991).

In the British situation, where school television is in widespread use across the primary and the second-level curriculum, it is evident that teachers consider it to be 'central and important' (Moses and Croll: 85). The most widespread influence on the curriculum is in 'supporting', 'extending' and 'reinforcing' what is being taught and in providing a 'substitute for direct experience' rather than determining the curriculum in any significant way. Some teachers claimed that they had been encouraged to adopt new strategies as a result of television broadcasts. In fact, over half of the secondary teachers interviewed who used school television said that it had expanded the range of teaching approaches which they thought were appropriate to their subjects (Moses and Croll: 86). In a period of very profound change in Irish education, in which new subject areas and approaches are being introduced into the curriculum and in which changes in pedagogies and in teacher attitudes are required, perhaps we should look much more seriously at educational television as a mechanism for supporting such changes and in the delivery of inservice education for teachers.

There are some warning notes arising from the findings. In the primary school most of the schools broadcast programmes are watched live (Moses and Croll: 38). This, of course, means that teachers have not previewed the programmes. It also means that teachers cannot stop the programmes at points which they might wish to emphasise. From an effective teaching point of view, there are many who would suggest that good preparation on the part of the teacher, and of the class, is the key to successful use of television as a medium in the classroom. However, it is pointed out that live viewing does not mean that the teacher is unprepared as they do make extensive use of programme notes, to which they attach a high degree of importance (Moses and Croll: 38-40; Moss, Jones and Gunter: 18).

There appears also to be a certain amount of profligacy with what, in effect, is a very expensive resource (e.g. the BBC alone spends stg£10 million annually on schools broadcasting). The VCR is used in English primary schools but mainly to record programmes going out live for later use with a parallel class. Only about one in eight programmes are kept and thus could be regarded as becoming a regular resource for the classroom (Moses and Croll: 39). Although perhaps a greater proportion of broadcast output could be conserved as a resource in schools, clearly English schools have built up considerable amounts of recorded material over the years. However, over one third of secondary teachers and two-thirds of primary teachers reported that there was no systematic cataloguing in their school (Moss, Jones and Gunter: 38).

Such apparent disorganization is perhaps the result of an *embarras de richesses* . It does suggest, though, that if Ireland were to re-establish a television service for schools it could produce a good quality service at a far more economical cost. A good example of this is the *Stay Safe* programme developed jointly by the Departments of Education and Health. This programme was developed to address the problem of child sexual abuse in particular, although some other safety issues are addressed. This was recently piloted in primary schools in Wicklow and Dublin and is now in use in the Leinster area. A feature of this programme is the accompanying resource packs as well as teacher inservice and meetings for parents.

Inservice education for teachers would appear to be an essential part of the effective usage of television in schools. This would also be the case if television were to be used as a support service in the implementation of new elements in the curriculum, such as technology (see remarks in Moses and Croll: 87 on teachers' desire for support in science and technology). Perhaps it is now the time, in the light of curricular changes at all levels of the school system and with the advent of distance education at third level, to take a new look at television services for schools. One of the first steps might involve research such as that in the two volumes reviewed here in order to clearly establish the extent and type of equipment in the system and existing usage of both video programmes and broadcast materials from the British channels. Videos, produced both in Ireland and elsewhere, are available in various subject areas. There is also no doubt that some Irish schools do use British broadcast material. The problem is that we do not know the extent of the usage, nor whether use is made of programme notes and other ancillary material, nor has there been any detailed evaluation of the suitability of these programmes for the children and curricula in the Republic.

Nevertheless, it is timely that RTE, in liaison with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), plan to transmit in Autumn 1992 a small number of programmes on the use of television as a medium in the classroom and also to re-transmit a selection of British schools programmes deemed appropriate to the new Junior Certificate (personal communication from RTE). As an interim measure, in the absence of home-produced programmes for schools, it will be welcomed by many teachers. It is to be hoped that it will be a prelude to a fuller development of the educational service, at a time when there is a greater need than ever for a support service for teachers.

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The Parameters of the Permissible: How *Scrap Saturday* Got Away With It

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Helena Sheehan

From October 1990 to December 1991, weekends had to be organized carefully. If you were not listening to RTE Radio 1 on Saturday morning, did not catch the repeat on Sunday or make arrangements for it to be recorded for you, you were at a loss during the next week. The word spread like wild fire and *Scrap Saturday* became central to the public discourse. Talk of audience fragmentation was forgotten. Here was a society talking to itself, coming to terms with itself, laughing at itself. We were connected to each other in a particular way through it. There is something missing between us now that it is gone. It captured the popular imagination on a grand scale and it will undoubtedly live on in folk memory for a long time to come.

Scrap Saturday pushed out the parameters of what was permissible in the realm of political and social satire. There has long been a problem in this area. Years ago, a writer in *Hibernia* referred to 'our parish pump society in which private malice never matured into political satire'. (1) Those who endeavoured to push out the boundaries of what was possible in the past, such as Niall Toibin, were left feeling embittered by the barrage of self-righteous abuse to which RTE often responded with apologies. In the days of *If The Cap Fits, Time Now, Mr T* and *Hall's Pictorial Weekly*, RTE programmes were often the subject of questions in the Dáil and resolutions of denunciation by county councils, as well as switchboards jammed and mailbags bursting with condemnation (2).

1. John Boland *Hibernia* 6 April 1978.

But *Scrap Saturday* went further and got away with it. This is not to say that there was not a lot of hostility out there, but it was reduced to near silence at least as far as the public discourse about it was concerned. There may have been rumblings of uneasiness and discontent but there was scarcely a word said against it in public. It was eerie. In fact it was not healthy. It may have been good that the balance of forces has changed in favour of what *Scrap Saturday* was doing, but the lack of public debate about it was not.

2. Radio Telefis Eireann satirical productions of the 1970s. For an account of the character of these programmes and the controversies they generated see Helena Sheehan (1987) *Irish Television Drama and Its Stories* Dublin : RTE, 177-181.

What was the most explicit attack on it so far was done with the most astonishing ineptitude and ignorance. Madeline Taylor Quinn, TD was like a daft child stumbling into a minefield. Based on garbled accounts from her constituents and without the most elementary understanding of the satirical nature of the programme, she went on to the nations's airwaves to complain about RTE carrying an ad for Sky News trivializing the Gulf War. From then on the programme went for her and she gave them plenty of material, even if she did not mention the programme in public again. 'MTQ' missiles were not considered to be smart weapons.

It was not only those who attacked RTE programmes who became targets. What was more remarkable was the way the programmes took on even those who had praised and promoted it, quite amazing in a society in which there is so much shameless toadying and mutual backscratching. It was Mike Murphy, do not forget, who gave Dermot Morgan his start as a media comedian in the days of *Live Mike*, and yet the jovial lightweight levelling banality of his role as arts presenter has been a running theme. He enthused over a piece of sculpture at an exhibition 'the striking red motif...the phallic symbolism' only to be told that it was the fire hydrant on the wall. On Shakespeare 'he's really in right now'. Gay Byrne too gave Dermot Morgan an almost sympathetic platform on the *Late Late Show* (the LLS interview was a superb performance) and the *Gay Byrne*

Show and played a selection of his favourite sketches at the end of the previous season. His enthusiasm for the show may well have dimmed since they began portraying him as vain, cynical, manipulative, condescending and parasitic on the grief of others. Even the radio audience itself got taken on, with GB being besieged by 'every menopausal old one in the country looking for a washing machine'.

No one can say the programme-makers went for easy targets. All the institutions of church and state and civil society were considered fair game, including those with most power over their own lives. 'And now on RTE, your only national broadcasting station, we bring you your only national religion'. RTE itself was often satirized scathingly. It was described as 'a charitable organization for distressed artists who provide part-time work on full-time pay for those suffering from alcoholism and broken marriages and who would otherwise find it difficult to secure steady employment'. The competition came in for it as well; Century Radio was 'a pension fund for ex-pat chat show hosts and Argentinean schmaltz peddlers.' On Ray Burke as Minister for Communications: 'a confidence trickster called Rambo, due to his gung-ho attitude and unpleasant demeanour'. On his broadcasting legislation: 'While he offered the pitch for sale, he was unaware what the game was, who wanted to play, how to score it or anything else. He just wanted to see RTE take a hiding'.

RTE programme formats were used as vehicles, not only for satirizing RTE programmes and presenters, but for opening out to the whole society as mediated by the media. *Today at 5, Morning Ireland, Bibi, Donncha's Sunday*, Charlie Bird's news reports, as well as sports and quiz shows, proved highly effective for their purposes. Other media formats too were appropriated: the Hollywood trailer 'Our left president.. the story of a woman who gave up socialism for love'. *2001* music underscoring the epic of 'the primates from whom home sapiens would eventually evolve, the Furies'. Long remembered foreign TV series such as *The Flintstones* and *Upstairs Downstairs* were called into play. Newspapers were combed both for form and content, *The Keane Edge* column looming large here. The Bible too had its uses with a reading from *The Book of Manipulations*: 'This disk will appear for twenty-one days and twenty-one nights and its number was one'. U2's marketing strategies came up in a number of formats. Paul McGuinness, being interviewed by Bibi, laid down the law: 'The days are gone when anybody can just walk into any megastore and just pick up a U2 record'.

No person or institution, dead or alive, home or abroad, could be considered safe, especially when Eamon Dunphy was allowed to rant about everything from the weather to history or philosophy (3). Even Mother Teresa: 'a tea towel on your head and good works with India's lower castes doesn't make a nun'. The relationship of poetry to power was a recurrent theme. There were the Bank of Free Publicity arts awards, Richard Kearney's poem celebrating the accession of Noel Davern as Minister for Education and Brendan Kennelly's preparation for performance at Kinsealy: 'I thought I would use the metaphor of the Toyota to suggest the powerful movement of the Haughey factor'. From a different ideological position, there was Fintan O'Toole explaining how Abbey plays would be 'like my newspaper article, only with dialogue'.

Brendan and Caitriona, who achieved instant mythical status as symbols of an Ireland on the run, came into it with a new SPUC sex video describing the 'now famous John Paul II method' (4). The Provisional IRA and the GAA were targets, as were the specific qualities of parts of the country stretching from Tallaght and Neilstown to Limerick. As the Soviet Union fell apart, free peoples of the world were invited to join the Limerick Union of Socialist Republics. And there was Eoghan Harris quoting Marx to Fine Gael as he coached them for the introduction of television cameras in the Dáil.

Politicians were a prominent presence, particularly those of the party in power. Perhaps in the end they became myopic with respect to the leadership struggle of Fianna Fail, but perhaps the nation was as well. The last programme had RTE including in its autumn schedules a nightly *Charles Haughey Resignation Show*. Dermot Morgan did not do justice to himself and his colleagues and their astute grasp on ironies permeating

3. Eamon Dunphy, a foot-baller, who became sports commentator and then expert on all-things-under-the-sun; Richard Kearney, a philoso-pher, who has turned to publishing poetry; Brendan Kennelly, a poet, who has written paeons of praise to Charles Haughey and fronted Toyota commercials; Fintan O'Toole, an Irish Times columnist, who was appointed literary advisor to the Abbey Theatre.

4. Brendan and Caitriona, a married couple who appeared on *The Late Late Show* criticizing the video *The Lovers Guide*; Eoghan Harris, a television producer, who transformed himself from Workers Party ideologue to Fine Gael advisor, who denounced socialism while still claiming to be a Marxist.

Irish society as a whole to suggest that they would be lost were Haughey to go. Haughey is gone now and, even with *Scrap Saturday* off the air, Dermot Morgan and his colleagues are not lost. The tape *Scrap Charlie*, done in the *Scrap Saturday* format, went to number one in the charts in its first week, getting the maximum mileage out of his going. Then Morgan immediately moved on to his successor. Over the airwaves now, we hear the sounds of his latest single 'A Country & Western Taoiseach'. It is impossible to imagine an Ireland in which he would be short of material.

Nevertheless, the CJ–PJ dialogues provided a picture of Charles Haughey, which instinctively seemed far truer than that of his public persona and much more interesting as well, the monstrous venality and vanity being far more vital than the stupefying banality and clichéd verbosity of his pretentious public performances. In the outpouring of sugary sentimentality that filled the newspaper pages when Haughey finally did fall, when even some of our most respected commentators lost the run of themselves altogether, Morgan did not recant. When asked for his final verdict on Haughey, he simply said that he said what he had to say in *Scrap Saturday*. Remembering *Scrap Saturday* helped keep me going through some of the most sick-making eulogies.

The programme ventured into territory considered taboo by the media until now although the person who went furthest in breaking the taboo was Terry Keane. For months there were the most blatant references to 'the loved one' and intimate details of the leader's off-stage life in her *Sunday Independent* column and then, come autumn, nothing more. All *Scrap Saturday* did at first was a parody of her ravingly pretentious column (which was not so easy to parody as it seemed to be pretending to parody itself so as to get away with it). When these references disappeared, they leapt into the gap. Interestingly, the only pressures restraining them were of the 'think of Maureen' variety (5).

5. Maureen Haughey, wife.

It met with censorship. The one hard case had to do with Brian Lenihan's liver (6). There were some pressures within RTE to lay off Limerick, but the Treaty 300 sketches continued unabated. It is remarkable that there were no libel suits. It was during this time that William Roche, who plays Ken Barlow in *Coronation Street* won a libel suit in Britain over remarks about being boring and smug. It was very mild stuff compared to qualities attributed to public figures by *Scrap Saturday*.

6. Brian Lenihan, TD, Fianna Fail candidate for president in 1990, who had a liver transplant.

This programme was designed to break the barriers. Dermot Morgan said that he decided to go for broke, to pull no punches. He did not consider it to be a bit of harmless fun. He sees himself as a 'political activist on stage' and believes that his strongest work comes from his deepest anger. *Scrap Saturday* came out of a long smouldering rage at the state of Irish society: 'the pettiness, the greyness of it all', the stifling influence of the Church, the excess of self-esteem radiated by politicians. There were icons that just had to be shattered and he was proud to be the iconoclast. Scrap Saturday was conceived in a deep inner necessity and its coming to fruition brought catharsis.

But it was also fun. Watching the process of production one day, the humour in between the sketches was often as funny as the sketches themselves. It flowed from the whole of the programme-makers' sensibility, the whole of their approach to the world. At one point, perhaps for my benefit, Morgan went into his Noonan persona and had Noonan castigating him for going too easy on the left (7).

7. Michael Noonan, TD, Fine Gael spokesman on finance.

Not everyone got every joke. Not everybody had to get every joke. I have to admit that some of the sporting references passed me by, as some of the political, philosophical or literary references may have been lost on others. This was part of the cleverness of the programme: that it could work on a number of different levels and appeal to diverse sections of the audience. It could reach a mass audience without reducing itself to the least common denominator to doso.

The programme had its faults. In the last season it disappointed almost as often as it delighted. Some gags were done to death. 'Gerry, sorry Gerard' started to drive me to distraction (8). *Around the World on Eighty Grand* was a great idea, but it often

8. Gerard Collins, TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time.

degenerated into a list of travel clichés and menus. It had lapses of taste: far too much detail about oral projectiles in relation to anal orifices.

Asked why it was ending, John P. Kelly, the commissioning editor at RTE, said that he thought it had started to run out and that it was better to get out on a high and leave them laughing. The best comedy series, such as *Faulty Towers* had only a limited run, he pointed out. There were no immediate plans to fill the slot and there was a possibility of a further series later on, but in the meantime, he was looking for new ideas. He admitted that it has raised the stakes and made it very difficult for anything which might follow.

Scrap Saturday brought to our collective life something we should not do without. I am willing to accept its ending only with the hope that it will be reincarnated in some new form, perhaps this time on television, which would make use of the visual virtuosity of Dermot Morgan as a performer, the originality of Gerry Stembridge as a television director and the skills of Pauline McLynn and Owen Roe as television actors. What is important is that this acute sense of the satirical potential of Irish society not be lost.

Ian Ang: *Desperately Seeking the Audience*

Tony Fahy, Head of Audience Research at RTE

London: Routledge 1991. stg£30.00, stg£9.99 (pbk)
ISBN 0415 052696 ISBN 0415 05270 X (pbk)

Tony Fahy

This book opens with the image of the 'couch potato', an unflattering contribution to the language of television criticism which originated in the U.S. in the 1970s. In another discipline a political scientist at a Dublin University kept a framed photograph of a group of men leaning and chatting on a wall outside a rural polling station prominently displayed in his office. This expert on opinion polls and election results needed to remind himself that the data he analyzed were aggregates of the views and votes of large numbers of real flesh and blood people of all ages, sexes etc. all around the country not unlike the voters in his photo. The distance between the macro-scientific view of the world, which necessarily abstracts from the human dimensions of the phenomenon being studied, and the micro-view, which looks at the issue at the individual or small group level, is one of the core issues addressed in this essay on the audience. The real agenda, however, suggests that macro measurement of television viewing is a fairly meaningless exercise which is really oriented towards 'control' of the audience and that the primary need is to understand the diversity and problematic nature of the viewing experiences of people in their own social settings.

An American communications scholar, who spent time in Dublin on a sabbatical, likened American television to Disneyland and Irish (or European) television to a well organized museum. The contrast in tone and content was so great that it took him time to adjust to the European public service model of programming compared to the commercially driven tone and content of US television. Europeans experience a culture shock in reverse when visiting the US and are initially dismayed by American programming. The philosophy underlying the difference is usefully explicated in this book: in commercial television, the audience is seen as a 'market', to be exploited for commercial gain, while the European public service model sees the audience as the 'public' or 'citizens' to be served with a mix of programming of an entertaining, informative and educational nature.

Commercial television 'delivers an audience' to the advertiser who, seeing the audience as potential consumers, buys advertisement space in the schedule. The ratings, being the recognised currency of audience measurement, thus assume a crucial role in commercial television systems in determining the size of the audience and the rate or price to be charged for advertisements. The history of the American ratings system and the debates and arguments surrounding diaries, set-meters and the more recent 'people-meter' technology is discussed along with a discussion of some technical measurement problems posed by a more complex media environment such as a multiplicity of channels, VCR usage etc.

The argument is pushed further, however, to suggest that measuring television viewing is virtually an impossibility since the viewing situation is, perhaps, not the fictional model of people exclusively devoting all their attention to the images on the screen. It is well known, both informally and through research (some quoted by the author), that television viewing is frequently subordinated to a range of real life interactions and activities of household members. That knowledge, nonetheless, does not invalidate the efforts made by research companies to win the cooperation of household members to register their television viewing when they themselves consider that they are watching television. The viewing experience and situation will thus be different for people and will also be different for the same person at different times.

The people-meter measurement system and its predecessors merely attempt to measure the size and composition of the audience for programmes which household members are free to watch or not as they choose. The rating system does not measure

the reactions of people to the programmes they view. However, the people-meter, has operated in Ireland (and in some other countries), does address the question of the degree of appreciation which viewers derive from names programmes. This is a useful qualitative gain from the new measurement technology.

The crisis in European broadcasting is discussed where the classical public service model of television programming is under threat from the new technologies (which brought the VCR and commercial satellite channels to many homes) and a shift in public policy which is opening up broadcasting to domestic commercial competition. The argument is advanced that there is a degree of convergence underway in European broadcasting where public broadcasters are addressing the new competitive environment and re-defining their role. The author argues that the very concept and process of audience measurement is one of the central arenas in which the process of convergence between the public service and commercial television is most obvious.

The book examines two European public service broadcasters – the BBC and VARA (the Dutch socialist network) – and argues that the original high ideals and 'paternalism' of both organizations in addressing their national groupings has given way to a more pragmatic view of their role as media studies have revealed the complexities of modern society. The author points to a decline in the philosophical certitude which characterised the early days of public service broadcasting and holds that institutional research has failed to address the true meaning of the viewing experiences of ordinary people. This jaundiced view of both broadcasting and academic research pervades the book. The alternative approach which is suggested – a focus on the viewer in his/her social situation – is too sketchily drawn to be helpful. Of course, good qualitative research can and does illuminate important aspects of the communications process and the viewing experience. Public broadcasters and the academic community continue to explore and support such research.

While the ratings are a major determinant of programming policy in the commercial television world, the results of audience research in public broadcasting in Europe have never fulfilled the same role in policy formation. Ratings are, of course, an important measure of relative performance but they are balanced with a number of other important considerations which derive from the public mandate in informing policy-making in public service television.

From the perspective of this reviewer, the main issue raised by this book is the discussion on the uncertainty which has affected European public broadcasting in the face of commercial competition and the new open market ethic. There is an urgent need to advance and intensify the debate on the national role of the public broadcasting in the final decade of the twentieth century in consultation with both governments and the public on whose behalf they were set up in the first place. The multi-faceted role of the research in European public broadcasting will emerge more clearly once the basic mandate of public broadcaster has been reviewed, renewed and agreed.

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Thomas Richards *The commodity culture of Victorian England: advertising and spectacle, 1851-1914*

London: Verso, 1991. stg £11.95 (pbk)
ISBN 0 86091 570 0

Greta Jones

This book sets out to analyze the growth of commodity culture in the British Isles, in particular the depiction of the commodity through advertising. Whereas in the Great

Exhibition in 1851, advertising played a significant but relatively small role, by the turn of the century it was ubiquitous and the subject itself of a large and growing industry. The material basis for this was increased prosperity among a large section of the middle and working class. Mass production brought consumer goods within their reach and increasingly consumption and the satisfactions to be obtained thereby formed an important part of their lives.

Richards singles out the advertisements themselves for attention. He takes two approaches. One, influenced by Marxism, talks about the fetishism of commodities, that is, the importance commodities acquire as representations of the relations of production. The second is the work of Guy Debord who in *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) argues that the advertisement has become the all embracing representation of the modern world, its most important cultural icon and a major reference point for the individual.

What picture emerges of the world through advertisements? Richards' analysis, in particular of patent medicines which formed a large part of the Victorian markets for consumer goods, demonstrates the influence of historical circumstances on this world. In the nineteenth century, themes of tradition, empire and patriotism were linked to the commodity. But there were also more perennial ideas emerging. The depiction of the body — often the female body — and the ideal that one could recreate oneself in line with an aesthetic ideal played an important part in commodity representation, then as now.

Advertisements reinforced hierarchy by embracing the 'royal', 'aristocratic' and 'exclusive'. They also promised that the commodity was the key to a world of plenty and satisfaction for everyone. Thus they were simultaneously 'democratic' offering access, availability and control, and 'hierarchial', emphasizing authority and exclusiveness.

Advertisements are the chief and most accessible pictorial, oral and literary representation of our culture. Richards' book is an attempt to come to terms with what this means. He uses Victorian advertisements to show how capitalism transmits messages about itself, creating a world of apparent choices. He also argues that in contemporary society, the form and content of these messages may change. This may be because of the intervention of new means of communication, because of political changes within capitalism itself.

On the whole Richards' arguments are convincing. The book nicely balances the theoretical content with exegesis of actual advertising practices. It should have appeal to historians and students of communications alike.

Broadcast and electronic media in Western Europe

London: Sage, 1992. 206pp stg£30.00, stg£11.95 (pbk)
ISBN 8039-8573-8 ISBN 8039-8574-6 (pbk)

Colum Kenny

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This is a useful book for students of European audiovisual developments. For the dedicated professional it will also help to make sense of current trends in broadcasting. But it is not an easy read and like so many academic works appears to be addressed primarily to other academics. It has been written by no less than seventeen of them, being a collection of essays of varying degrees of clarity by social scientists from a number of Western European countries.

One of the problems in describing what is happening to European television services at present is that, as soon as one begins to go beyond general assertions, there is a danger of being overwhelmed by national detail. It is important that any Cook's tour of particular aspects of media policy and practice is guided by an author who does not lose sight of the need to come to conclusions, even if the conclusion is sometimes that there are inconsistencies and no simplistic formulas.

It is clear to anyone who works in or who observes European broadcasting and cable services that certain trends are emerging. Public service broadcasters have lost their national monopolies, there is a degree of internationalism and cross media ownership, regulations are less rigid if not less numerous, American programming is increasing, European production is changing in nature and there is a lot of uncertainty and insecurity about the future.

Such is the terrain of this book. Chapters include 'The Building of Media Empires', 'The Technology Factor', 'Small States in the Shadow of the Giants', 'Regulation of Media at Local Level' and 'Television Content: Dallasification of Culture?'. One of three co-authors of the latter contribution is Mary Kelly of University College Dublin.

This is a book written by an association of social scientists known as the Euromedia Research Group (ERG). The group, like the European Institute for the Media and other scholarly organizations, attempts to make sense of how European integration and co-operation is affecting what we watch and what we produce in Europe.

But in many cases the discourse of academics often seems to me to be quite closed, the audience being that of peers rather than public. The language and structures used can be indicative. The book under review here, for example, purports to set the scene with chapters entitled 'From Structure to Dynamics' and 'A Framework for Analysis of Media Change in Europe in the 1990s'. Anything more calculated to deter a general reader, even a professional in the field, I can hardly imagine.

Especially turgid and unsatisfactory is an attempt near the start of the book, by Denis McQuail and others, to construct 'models of policy change'. As an exercise in methodology in a thesis this would be fine. But given its tentative and inconclusive nature, it should have been kept for the coffee room or conference chamber by the authors of this work. In fact the last chapter of this book would have made a much more interesting opening, truly setting the scene and enticing readers to find out the reasoning behind the call to 'Wake up, Europe'.

Social scientists very often purport to wish to effect social, economic and political change. So why do they not use simpler language, especially when lecturing people on communications? This may have something to do with rites of academia, where certain types of publication are ranked higher than others when it comes to preferment. This is reflected in the way in which communications academia often appear indifferent to trade and professional publications. Titles such as *Broadcast*, *TV World*, *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Television Business International* are seldom cited and, when they are, authors' names are seldom given.

Yet such publications can be of more value to decision-makers than most of what one is likely to find in many academic publications. Not that academics do not rely on specialist journalism: often this is the principal source of their primary information, rather than broadcasters or public servants.

Judged on its own terms, however, as an academic publication, *Dynamics of Media Politics* is a contribution to continuing efforts to define and focus questions of relevance in communications. It is a companion volume to *The Media in Western Europe* and follows on from two 1986 books published by the ERG: *New Media Politics* and *Electronic Media Policy in Western Europe*. The editors, Siune and Truetzschler, work at Aarhus, Denmark, and Rathmines, Dublin, respectively.

At various educational institutions throughout Ireland there is a growing interest in communications studies. It is to be hoped that the investment in staff and resources involved can be co-ordinated nationally in some way, so that the training and research needs of this small state may be served as efficiently as possible. But academic freedom must also be protected.

Like the publications of the European Institute for the Media, the books of the ERG, are welcome. *Dynamics of Media Politics* is recommended to anyone interested in the future of the audiovisual sector in Europe.

Ann Shearer *Survivors and the media*

Mary Maher, staff journalist, *The Irish Times*

London: Broadcasting Standards Council/John Libbey, 1991.
80pp. stg £7.50
SBN 0 86196 332 6 (pbk)

Andrea Millwood Hargrave *Taste and Decency in Broadcasting*

London: Broadcasting Standards Council/John Libbey, 1991.
64 pp. stg £7.50
ISBN 0 86196 331 8 (pbk)

Mary Maher

Early last year during a period of intense fighting in one of the republics of the former Soviet Union, an enterprising photographer found himself in the home of a young soldier killed in combat. The dead boy's body was stretched out on his bed and his family were gathered around him. Some were weeping, some were comforting; some had their hands clasped to their breasts, others covered their eyes or turned their heads away.

The photographer recorded the scene, and the results were stunning. In composition, in the expressions of grief and pain it captured, the picture was more like a Rembrandt painting than the work of even a very gifted news photographer. *The Irish Times* cleared six columns to use it the next morning. Management at *The Independent* in London waited until Sunday and used it in colour across a double page spread. Some months later, the photographer won the top award in a major international photographic competition, to no one's surprise.

But no matter how beautiful the photograph, had the subject been an Irish family in mourning *The Irish Times* would never have used it. If the scene had taken place somewhere in Britain, the reputable British papers would similarly have refrained from publication.(The tabloids, as we all know, are a different matter.)

The first point of reference in any discussion about the ethics of news reporting of human tragedy is location. A new junior sub-editor on a foreign desk learns in the first few weeks how to tabulate deaths as news value — a rough equation cynically expressed as '500 drowning Indians equals the same space as one Irish Christian Brother'. What happens far away is as remote as fiction and can usually be handled bluntly without offence. What happens to us ourselves, our families, close friends is so private that in most circumstances any notice from the outside world is an offensive intrusion.

What happens next or near us has an impact that can almost be measured geographically. The disaster at the football match in Hillsborough, for instance, yielded the kind of news photography that war correspondents make their reputations on, visual evidence of catastrophe as it occurs. But many Irish readers and listeners found

the sight of such near neighbours suffocating before the world's cameras objectionably painful. In Britain of course, the protests were widespread and sustained.

The fact that attitudes change with distance in space, as in time, affects any discussion on the ethics of news reporting and human sensibilities, and it is a pity, I think, that the issue was not explored in either of the pamphlets produced by the Broadcasting Standards Council in Britain. They are, nonetheless, excellent publications, providing research rather than conjecture on how the public feels about what journalists do to them and about them.

Survivors and the Media is particularly useful, I think, for anyone involved in news journalism. It is based on two studies, one a demographically representative survey of 1,050 people, the other a report drawn from intensive interviews with fifty-four survivors of tragedies. As it happens, one-fifth of the first group, who were questioned on their attitudes to coverage of disasters, had themselves survived either violence or disaster that was nationally reported, while the second group included both survivors of disasters, or parents and relatives of victims, including rape, murder and accident victims.

Their responses make harrowing reading and for that reason, strongly recommended reading not only for media students but for media workers. Precisely because so much news is about violence and tragedy, journalists develop a second and tougher working skin as a necessary defence mechanism, just as police, fire brigade and medical workers do. We all need our sensitivities re-sharpened regularly, and nothing does this so effectively as the individual human voice of suffering.

But there are also some valuable lessons in the strong general endorsement of the positive role of the media, coming as it does from people who have been in bruising personal contact with publicity. Given a range of statements to rank on a five-point scale from 'agree strongly' to 'disagree strongly', for instance, most of the respondents agreed that 'people sometimes need to be shocked to make them aware of the severity of events', and that 'people should be kept informed of things even if they cannot do anything about them'.

Most also agreed that television programmes did sometimes affect how they thought about an issue, and that freedom of expression should always be allowed. They strongly disagreed with the view that 'there is so much violence on television nowadays that nothing affects me any more'. While some did avoid programmes which were related to their own painful experience, more found themselves particularly attracted and attentive to such programmes.

There was a general consensus in these areas regardless of what experiences the survivors had been through. Similarly, asked to rank ten hypothetical television items in terms of 'acceptability', there was a strong consensus on the most and least acceptable items. Those most acceptable were, understandably, the least emotive and most worthy approaches possible to news shots of the scene of an incident after the bodies had been removed, or pictures of the victims being visited in hospital by members of the government or the royal family.

The least acceptable news of the hypothetical broadcasts and most vehemently condemned by the respondents were those that showed the scene of a major incident in which dead or seriously injured people were recognizable; pictures of people who had been bereaved and were in an emotional state, or close-up shots of blood-streaked areas where victims fell.

There was broad consensus, too, in the second pamphlet, reporting on a survey by the British Standards Council on attitudes toward good taste and common decency in television and radio; but I imagine most readers will find the results a predictable reflection of age, background and station-in-life, i.e. parenthood. The pamphlet is still a provocative and lively read, covering such general issues as bad language, racist or

other discriminatory terminology, and the ever-perplexing problem of what children get to hear and see of the outside world on television and radio, and what to do about it.

The answers raise more questions: is it a good or bad thing that surprisingly few people these days seem to regard television as an 'extremely strong' influence on the viewing public ? (Only two to fourteen per cent depending on the subject covered.)

Should the Irish be pleased, annoyed or simply puzzled to know 'Paddy' is the most widely tolerated ethnic appellation to respondents in Britain – seventy- four per cent of respondents found it very acceptable, compared to a sixty-nine per cent approval for 'Taffy' and a thirty per cent for 'Paki' but that 'Mick', for some reason, is considered very acceptable to only sixty-three per cent? As a woman, should I be disturbed that the four-letter 'C' word is considered a strong swear word by slightly fewer people than the four-letter 'F' word? (eighty-six to eighty-seven per cent, and I do not care if it is only one point, I am a little disturbed.)

The survey on which the pamphlet is based is the first in a three-part cycle of research. A subsequent study looked particularly at attitudes toward violence in television fiction, and in 1992 attitudes toward sex and sexuality will be investigated. The results will, I suspect, confirm what is evident throughout this pamphlet, that on the whole people recognize that, as the Council says, 'times have changed and customs change', and so do our attitudes about what is fit and proper.

Most of us, it seems, are trying our best to accept life as it is without sacrificing what we hope for. Your heart would have to go out to the bewildered parent who said, of children and telly, 'You want to give them a reasonably balanced picture of the world outside because they've got to go out and live in that world, but you don't want them to go about it too soon'.

Joan Mulholland *The language of negotiation – a handbook of practical strategies for improving communication*

London: Routledge, 1991. stg £30.00, stg£ 10.99 (pbk)
ISBN 0 414 06040 0 ISBN 0 415 06041 (pbk)

Henry McClave, lecturer in English, Dublin Institute of Technology.

Henry McClave

There is a flourishing industry in the production of handbooks on communication skills aimed at business studies students and practising business men and women. Most of these books follow a well-trodden path and there is little to choose between them. Typically, they contain much useful advice of the 'do's and don't's' variety, but rarely support it with research findings. The best are written in a plain no-nonsense style; the worst with a kind of bar-stool informality that is an insult to the reader's intelligence.

What distinguishes Joan Mulholland's book is that it is both practical and scholarly. Its main objective is to help professional and business people improve their negotiating skills by attaining a heightened awareness of written and spoken language. But, because of its academic tenor, it should also be of value to students of linguistics, particularly those interested in the practical application of language to professional life. Readers will find many familiar negotiating terms examined and dissected with academic thoroughness. They will also find that the author's advice is soundly based on current research, although this is seldom made explicit in the text.

In summary, *The Language of Negotiation* has three main areas of interest. First, it is concerned with the functions of language, how it relates to history and culture, and how it is used in discourse. Second, it considers particular forms of communication such as the conversation or written report and suggests various strategies of using language effectively in these contexts. And last, it analyzes and advises on a number of key negotiating acts such as accepting, arguing, discussing, etc. Tagged on to this is a final short chapter on how to remember and record information, but this looks like something of an afterthought.

A valuable emphasis in the book is on the need to attend to the interpersonal function of language as well as its function in creating meaning. There are very good sections on the way in which we use language to establish a social bond with the hearer, establish a role for ourselves in the interaction, and set the tone of the exchange. The notion of face is explained, and the virtue of using 'politeness strategies' to save one's own or the hearer's face is stressed at several points. These various interpersonal aspects of language are shown to be particularly problematic in the case of cross-cultural communication where ideas on what is socially appropriate will differ from one region or ethnic group to another.

If I had a question to ask, it would be about the author's choice of communication activities when she comes to consider some of the specific forms in which negotiation takes place. According to her own definition, negotiation has as its main objective the settlement of differences between parties and their subsequent agreement on a common plan of action. Given this definition, it seems difficult to justify full chapters on the media interview and the use of the telephone, — and nothing on the meeting which is preeminently the medium of negotiation for most professional and business people. A media interview will certainly contain some elements of negotiation, but its primary purpose is to elicit information from the interviewee and entertain the public. In any case, it is a form that the ordinary professional person seldom confronts. Likewise, the telephone is not a commonly used medium for negotiating; it is more suited, instead, to the communication of simple enquiries, requests and confirmations.

I suspect that managers and trade unionists who are looking for a manual clearly focused on the negotiating process may find *The Language of Negotiation* too discursive for their liking. On the other hand, readers with a more general interest in language and its practical application should enjoy the book and learn much from it. Language skills that have become dull need to be sharpened every so often, and Joan Mulholland has provided an excellent whetstone.

W. Leiss, S.Kline and S. Jhally *Social Communication in Advertising*

London: Routledge, 1991. 340pp stg£10.99 (pbk)
ISBN 0415 903548

Jim Nolan

In the main there are two kinds of books about advertising – critical works which seem at times to lay all the world's ills at its door or 'how to do it' and 'how it works' books which may also include a spirited justification of the role and importance of advertising. But there is a third kind – books about advertising by academics which generally baffle or intimidate those who work in advertising. They either do not recognize the business they work at or they are overwhelmed by esoteric formulae which do not seem to have much connection with the job of making and placing advertisements. This book is different – it does not fit easily into any of the three kinds. Certainly it is written by academics, three of them in fact, but it is a very interesting and useful review of advertising and with a much broader perspective than one would expect from the title.

Social Communication in Advertising is a wide-ranging book which should have a particular appeal for people in advertising since it deals with a broad canvas, covering the main areas and tracking longer term trends which those who are too close to the day-to-day advertising activity could well miss. It also deserves a welcome for its even-handed treatment of all the principal areas which it covers. Better still, this is an attractive, very readable book, mercifully free of jargon – can you imagine what a combination of academic and advertising jargon would do for communications? The difficult issues facing the business are discussed in an admirably clear and complete manner.

None of the major social issues involving advertising are shirked including the hardy-annual of debates about advertising – does it influence public attitudes or is it influenced by public attitudes? – does it shape opinion or is it shaped by public opinion? – the latter being the much more likely situation. Like most 'chicken and egg' discussions there is no clear-cut answer but this book places its verdict in the mean – somewhere in the middle. Perhaps at times individual campaigns could be said to be subject to both influencing public opinion or attitudes and being influenced by them.

Advertising is seen as a 'privileged form of discourse' meaning that we accord it a place of special prominence. The authors argue that as the influence of other privileged forms of discourse – church sermons, political oratory and the advice of family elders – diminishes, the influence of advertising increases. They hold that the stage has now been reached where this influence has become 'discourse through and about objects'. The book develops this idea against the back-drop of advertising which they describe as 'the place at which media, industry and lifestyles converge'. In dealing with this big theme the book is much more comprehensive than its title would suggest and is in fact, a most useful general book on advertising. It covers fairly and fully the various criticisms of advertising and the responses to them, it goes into the origins and development of advertising agencies, how they are structured and what they do. A major portion of the book deals with a very wide and detailed analysis of advertisements by means of a painstaking methodology which appears to practitioners to be a shade pedantic.

This book is unusual being the 2nd edition (1991) of a work which first appeared in 1939 and its three authors are all associated with North American Universities. This gives it a somewhat dated American feel which is reinforced by the illustrations which include little recent material. *Social Communications in Advertising* is a very useful work with a well presented case for the influence of advertising which may, however, give the business more weight than it deserves. These minor comments apart this is a fine book for anyone interested in the place of advertising in Society.

James Lull *Inside family viewing*

London: Routledge, 1990. 208pp stg £35.00, stg £10.99 (pbk)
ISBN 0415 044146 ISBN 0415 049970 (pbk)

Brian Torode, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Trinity College Dublin 2.

— Rejoinder to Martin McLoone's review in ICR Vol 1

Brian Torode

According to Martin McLoone, James Lull is the victim of doctrinal error: the belief that 'audiences are active agents in the creation of reality' as opposed to

> the fact, central to all forms of Marxism, that audiences are already socialized in such a way that they have only limited and sanctioned access to discourses which allow for resisting preferred meanings.

McLoone advocates a theoretical debate in which Lull's 'humanist formulations will be used against him'.

I sincerely hope that this will not be the response to this publication. There always is ongoing theoretical debate. Now as ever, that debate is monopolized by the small educated elite who lecture in media studies, sociology, and other esoteric professions. Lull is not a theorist and the voices he publishes are not those of academics. They have not been heard before. If McLoone gets his way they will not be heard again.

Admittedly some of these voices are strange to our ears. There is the US army officer in Germany who blames the high divorce rate among his troops on the lack of English language television: 'that means a soldier and his wife have got to talk to each other in the evenings and they suddenly discover that they really don't like each other'; the working class family who are grateful for television because it keeps the grandparents (who live three doors down the street) occupied at night; and the husband who makes up to his wife (who abandoned a medical scholarship to marry him) by picking out medical programmes on television for her even when these conflict with his favourite shows. These examples are from chapter 2. 'The Social Uses of Television' (first published 1980).

Chapters 3, 'Family Communication Patterns' (1980) and 5, 'How Families Select Television Programmes' (1982), report Lull's revival of the 'Mass Observation' research technique developed in pre-war Britain. Unlike the individual ethnographic method pioneered by the US 'Chicago school' during the same period, this involves training more than ninety observers to code behaviour in 'the same' objective categories over a period of two or three half days spent with a family, followed by an interview.

The first paper distinguishes two family styles. Socio-oriented parents are found to be heavy television viewers themselves. They use television as background noise, for companionship, to punctuate time, to regulate talk and plan activities, to illustrate experience for conversational entrance and many other purposes. They agree that television is useful to them for interpersonal objectives ranging from structuring their activities and talk patterns to uses of the medium for more complex relational purposes. Though I frankly doubt whether these parents would understand what is here attributed to them, these are recognizable as homes in which television viewing is a central and shared family activity.

By contrast concept-oriented parents show 'extreme disregard for television as a significant contributor to family communications'. They value individual expression, debate and discussion of ideas, but do use television as a means to transmit values to and regulate their children, and to facilitate arguments. Relations within these families sound more distant and activities in the home more individualized.

The 'socio's', who presumably read tabloid newspapers and are less highly educated, are relatively dependent on television, whereas the 'conceptos' are relatively independent of it, having fuller access to printed media, including books. But because they attach more importance to television, members of 'socio' homes are more argumentative when television programmes are selected than are individuals from the 'concepto' homes. Hence television programme selection is the occasion for individual expression debate and discussion in the 'socio' homes. It is frustrating that Lull has failed to follow up on this finding, in the eight years since it was published, by the recording and analysis of these family arguments about television. However this is a well-signposted research priority indicated by his work.

Gender division in programme selection is a theme throughout the book. Answers to the question 'who is responsible for control of the main television set at home' (chapter 5) seem at first unambiguous:

> Fathers were named most often as the person who controls the selection... Children and mothers were more likely to regard fathers this way than were the fathers themselves.

But is this not just the conventional response that any mother or child knows they are expected to provide? Lull finds several indications that this is so. In one household a loud charismatic prayer ritual was employed so that 'God can tell us what shows to watch' From this family's standpoint, God was the responsible party, but the questionnaire would not have permitted this answer. Told that God controls the television selection, a humanist asks what man is articulating God's choice? Similarly, told that Father controls the selection, a feminist asks, what woman or child is articulating his choice? As Lull puts it, 'while men may have more formal say than women in program selection, women may exercise greater actual influence'.

Chapter 7 challenges theorizing by David Morley to the effect that the home is a 'site of leisure' for men, within which they plan viewing carefully and watch attentively, whereas it is a 'site of work' for women in which their television viewing is 'distracted' by domestic duties. Lull finds that:

> When fathers arrive home ... there is a characteristic shifting of the attention of children ... away from their mother to their father. Fathers ... often assume greater emotional responsibility for the children at night, and this role ... continues into evening television viewing. ... My point is that men are also working while they watch television.

Cross-cultural research is cited throughout the book, and has clear conclusions concerning gender division, namely that 'differences in programme preferences held by men and women all over the world follow a predictable pattern', independent of political-economic system or broadcasting policy.

> Men everywhere prefer sports, action-oriented programmes and information programming (especially news) while women prefer dramas (including serials, soap operas, and films) and music/dance/comedy-based programmes.

Accordingly gender-divided viewing patterns can be read off directly from the published television schedules. Most strikingly in Venezuela, where women manage family activity in the half of all homes in which they are single parents, and in many two-parent homes as well, television viewing has a feminine quality, dominated by telenovelas at prime-time. These programmes are not machismo, so men do not watch.

Chapter 6 is methodologically distinct from the rest of the book. It presents *New Star* a twelve-part 1986 political soap opera, the first product of a new local television station which was later networked throughout China. This shows the rise of a young reformer (Li) his challenge to the old bureaucrat (Gu), and his personal defeat: he is transferred, but his ideas live on. Li's involvement with two women, one more traditional, the other more liberated is a feature of the story. So is collusion among the older generation (Gu gains support from Li's father). Incompetence and a system of guanxi ('you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours') are shown to be endemic.

The audience response ('*New Star* fever') was studied by a Chinese sociologist (Zhou Yong-ping) as well as by Lull. More than ninety per cent of viewers liked the show, but many found the conflict 'exaggerated'. They denied that problems could be solved as rapidly as Li did, and denied that he would last even as long as two months in real life.

Many claimed that guanxi was unavoidable, as shown by the fact that Li gained his post then lost it again due to the influence of his own father.

Despite all this Li became 'China's first television hero' symbolic of 'absolute fairness', and as such a re-living of the famous judge Bao of several centuries before. Gu became a media villain, combining all the bad qualities both of Chinese tradition and of the Communist party. As such, Gu was more real than Li: 'in the real world we seldom see a person like Li, but we see many people like Gu'. A critique of the drama is then that it personalizes social change.

This paper, part of a forthcoming book on Chinese television, now requires a postscript on the aftermath of the 1990 Tien an Men Square massacre, in which young reformers seem to have been decisively defeated by the old guard.

Lull's collection of papers is incomplete and sketchy in some respects, over-ambitious in others. But it is always enquiring and lively, and it marks a clear trajectory over ten years of research, away from global generalizations and typologies and towards precise attention-to-detail in studies of the daily lives of viewers of television, which it treats as a resource put to practical use in their hands. Marx himself informed us that 'social life is essential practical'. I hope that Lull's work will inspire more work of this practical character, and less theorizing, in communication research.

Notes for Contributors

1. *Irish Communications Review* aims to provide a forum in Ireland for research, analysis and discussion of all matters related to media communications and to communications studies. Media Communications encompasses broadcasting, film, journalism, public relations, advertising, media education, etc.

Studying the media within their political, cultural, economic and historical contexts, it seeks to encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences, and to present information on new developments relevant to the field. International as well as national issues will be examined.

Irish Communications Review is divided into sections covering research reports, analytical articles, documents, statistical data, and book reviews. From time to time, it will contain visual, pictorial and photographic essays.

2. *Irish Communications Review* welcomes contributions from practitioners, academics and researchers. They should be addressed to the Editors, *Irish Communications Review*, Department of Communications, Dublin Institute of Technology, College of Commerce, Rathmines, Dublin 6, Ireland.

3. Contributions to the journal may be made under any of the following headings: a) Articles, normally 4,000 to 6,000 words, excluding tables, illustrations and references; b) Reports and commentary accompanying documents or data, 2,000 to 4,000 words; c) Book reviews, not exceeding 1,000 words; and d) Pictorial, photographic and visual essays. While we welcome unsolicited book reviews, potential reviewers should consult the editors before undertaking a review.

Publication is not automatic, and all editorial decisions are taken by the editors with relevant advice where appropriate. All contributions will be acknowledged.

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British spelling should be used. The text should be sub-divided by section headings where appropriate.

6. Footnotes, numbered consecutively, should be used sparingly and placed at the end of the article; they should apply only for substantive material whose inclusion in the text would be distracting. Citations in the text should follow the 'author–date–page' system, as per Sheehan (1985:5) or (McLoone and MacMahon, 1984:10) or (Clancy et al., 1986).

7. References, under the heading 'References', should be placed alphabetically at the end of the text. Multiple entries by an author or set of authors in the same year should be postscripted a,b,c (1988a, 1988b, 1988c), etc

Citation formulas for references should be as follows:

Sheehan, H. (1987) *Irish Television Drama. A Society and its Stories* Dublin: Radio Telefis Eireann.

Bell, D. (1985) 'Proclaiming the Republic: Broadcasting Policy and the Corporate State in Ireland', *West European Politics*, 8(2).

Kelly, M. (1984) 'Twenty Years of Current Affairs on RTE', pp89—106 in M. McLoone and J. MacMahon (eds.), *Television and Irish Society. 21 Years of Irish Television.* Dublin: Radio Telefis Eireann.

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